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Showing that Shakespeare's Italian contemporaries interpreted the story of the Moor and the Lady of Venice as symbolizing the tragedy of their country in the grip of Spain

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DEDICATED

TO

MY BELOVED FRIEND

MISS C. P. TREMAIN

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In two previous volumes, "Hamlet and the Scottish Succession," and "Macbeth, King Lear, and Contemporary History,"* I have endeavoured to develop a method of studying Shakespeare's plays in accord with the literary psychology of his own time. Both these volumes met with a considerable degree of sympathy, and a good many of my critics agreed, in whole or in part, with the point of view expressed. There were, however, a certain number who totally failed to understand the essence of the method. My adverse critics argued that human nature was the same in Shakespeare's age as in ours, and that therefore literary psychology, or the method of depicting human nature, must be the same.

But there is a very curious fallacy involved here. It may be accurate to say that the fundamental passions of men are the same in all ages, but their *understanding of themselves*, *their*

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scientific psychology, and *their representation of themselves or their literary psychology* do vary very greatly indeed.

Let me give a very simple concrete illustration. In a French author, contemporary with Shakespeare, I come across the following tale of a father and two sons: The father has an elder, legitimate son who is devoted to him and his interests and is entirely loyal and honourable; he has also a younger, illegitimate son who is both ambitious and unscrupulous and who aims at dispossessing his elder brother from his inheritance and even at seizing the inheritance during the father's lifetime. The younger son suggests to the father that the elder is disloyal and is plotting his destruction, and the father, being a very rash and imprudent person, believes the statement on wholly insufficient evidence and is furiously enraged. The elder son takes to flight; he suffers the greatest misery and hardship; he has to consort with beggars, to live under the open sky, exposed to the most terrible tempests. Meanwhile the younger son seizes the property of his father, mutilates him and drives him into exile; the blind and miserable parent is about to cast himself over an abyss to total destruction when he is saved by the elder, legitimate son, who pardons all the injuries he has himself received and comes to the rescue.

Now, everyone can see at a glance the likeness between this tale and the Gloucester portion of "King Lear," and my method of dealing with Shakespeare is to ask first and foremost what this tale *means* for Shakespeare and his contemporaries.

It is at this point that my adverse critic interrupts and says: "Why ask the question at all? It is totally unnecessary. What *can* the tale mean for Shakespeare and his contemporaries other than what it means for us? The men of the sixteenth century liked tales just as we like tales; they were interested in human nature just as we are interested in human nature, and human nature is the same in all ages. *Of course* the tale meant for them exactly what it means for us."

But this is totally untrue. The men of Shakespeare's era habitually thought and wrote in symbolism. This tale does not mean in the least what a modern critic assumes it to mean. It is not a romance at all. I have taken it from Pierre Mathieu's book, "The Glorious Life and Deplorable Death of Henry IV." (1610); Pierre Mathieu was the Historiographer-Royal of France, and this story is his way of writing the history of his own country.

The elder, legitimate son, corresponding to Shakespeare's Edgar, is Henry of Navarre; the younger, illegitimate son is Henry of Guise; the

father is sometimes France and sometimes Henry III.; the blindness is the moral blindness of a man who casts out his friend and cherishes his enemy; the blindness is also the blindness of France as a nation; the terrible tempests through which the elder son wanders exposed and shelterless, through which the father wanders exposed and shelterless, these terrible tempests are the Civil Wars in France. As for the vast abyss or the precipice, it is the total destruction which threatens the whole realm. France, in its ill-treatment of its heir, in its moral blindness, is about to leap over a precipice to total destruction when Navarre intervenes and saves his country.

What is more, we are not dealing here with an accidental resemblance, a resemblance that might be purely a coincidence. *This method of writing is typical of the age.* This is the real crux of the problem. This method of writing in vivid metaphor, which I have called mythology, is not employed by Pierre Mathieu only; the same identical metaphors for the same identical things can be found in scores upon scores of contemporary French poets, panegyrists, historians, and pamphleteers. Thus the Civil Wars of France are again and again described as terrific tempests, sweeping the land, abating their force and then again resuming it. Pierre Mathieu describes them in this

way scores of times in his poems and in his histories; Malherbe employs again and again the same metaphor in his Odes; it is common imagery in the poems of Salluste du Bartas; in Agrippa D'Aubigné's "Les Tragiques" (1613), and in the anonymous poets of the "Memoires de l'Estat de France sous Charles IX." (1576); they all employ repeatedly and continually the same imagery for the massacre of St. Bartholomew and for the Civil Wars. Agrippa D'Aubigné, in "Les Tragiques," describes in detail these tempests, the rushing rain is made up of the deluges of tears; the shrieking winds are the bitter lamentations; the lightning is the fire of human hate; the thunder is the rage of human wrath; the bitter cold is the absence of all human charity.

It is the same with the other symbols. The 'precipice edge' is, as Professor Rose reminds me, simply a literal translation of the Latin metaphor '*stare in precipito loco.*' It is certainly in the sixteenth century one of the commonest symbols for a country on the verge of total destruction. We find it hundreds of times, not only in Pierre Mathieu, but in the anonymous poets of the "Memoires de l'Estat de France sous Charles IX."; France is on the verge of an abyss, she is tottering on the edge of a precipice, she will soon fall to total destruction.

So is the simile of the quarrelling and un-

grateful children an exceedingly common symbol for the factions of a Civil War. In "Les Tragiques," Agrippa D'Aubigné repeatedly describes France either as a mother whose sons fight and destroy each other upon her very bosom, or a father whose sons (like those of Œdipus) quarrel and destroy each other, or as an old man who, like Lear, gropes with trembling hands over the body of his child dead before him.

It is the same with the metaphor of 'nakedness' in tempests. It is used as a common symbol for anyone exposed to great disasters. There may at times be actual circumstances which suggest it as in the case of Admiral Coligny, whose body was dragged naked through the gutters of Paris, thrown into the Seine, hanged on a gallows, and partially burnt by a fire lit beneath, etc. The poets of the "Memoires de l'Estat de France sous Charles IX." symbolize this outrage by saying that Coligny's naked body was exposed to the assaults of all the elements of air, fire, and water; they sometimes personify France as an ungrateful daughter who thrusts out her old and generous father naked in tempests; they describe him as a loving father who has lived only for her, yet is rent by her nails; she exposes him naked to the assaults of all the elements; he will perish in the anguish caused

by his ungrateful child, and she will follow him to the grave. Sometimes France itself is personified as an old man, turned out by his ungrateful children naked in a tempest, the tempest of the St. Bartholomew and the Civil Wars; the venerable age and the august character of the old man, the hideous ingratitude with which he is treated, are the themes of the poet's wrath.

But the metaphor is common even where there are no actual physical circumstances to suggest it; thus Pierre Mathieu describes Henry of Navarre also as wandering naked through the tempests of the Civil Wars, and this is true only in the sense that he did suffer real privations.

The metaphor of 'beggars' or of 'naked beggars' for the Protestants was, in fact, common to all Europe, for the Flemish Protestants had taken the name "Les Gueux," as symbolic of themselves and as expressing the fact that they had nothing to lose.

Nor is this all! A country in the anguish of Civil War is repeatedly represented as an individual insane and mad with its sufferings. Thus in "Les Tragiques," Agrippa D'Aubigné represents France as insane and besotted with its sufferings, guided only by its own folly.

Then there is the Queen of Navarre (mother of Henry of Navarre), who is described in the

"Memoires de l'Estat de France sous Charles IX." as the loyal daughter of France, repudiated for her truthfulness—*i.e.*, her loyalty to the Protestant religion—disinherited for her truthfulness, but the true and loyal daughter of France who serves her fatherland to the end and who is murdered in serving it.

Agrippa D'Aubigné, in "Les Tragiques," also personifies the Protestant Church in France as a woman of heroic heart, who is imprisoned or put to death either by the cord or by the sword.

Now, anyone can see at a glance the resemblance between all this and "King Lear," and there is thus a *possibility* that "King Lear" may have a meaning associated with that of these French poets and pamphleteers, the contemporaries of Shakespeare. One thing is absolutely certain: there does exist a vast contemporary mythology representing France sometimes as an old man wandering naked in a tempest, an old man obsessed by folly, or a madman driven mad by ingratitude, sometimes as a blind man about to cast himself over a precipice, sometimes as a father whose daughter has treated him with base ingratitude, sometimes as a father who has repudiated his loyal and grateful son and given all his affection to a disloyal and ungrateful son.

What is more, this or similar mythology is a common poetic theme. Thus Spenser's

"Faerie Queene" is really an epic of the religious wars in Europe; "Les Tragiques" is an epic of the religious wars in France; "Tyl Ulenspiegel" is a sort of prose epic of the religious wars in Flanders.

This sixteenth-century mythology was admirably suited to epic treatment, and much of it was just as admirably suited to dramatic treatment. Thus, the conception of an old man, exposed naked to a tempest and driven insane by his suffering, wandering over a desert land where the beasts accumulate and the men decay, accompanied by nothing but his own folly, this really is a superb subject and we can understand that it might appeal to any first-rate tragic dramatist.

The same thing is true of the father who repudiates his noble son and trusts the ignoble son, who, blind in his folly, is about to cast himself to total destruction when he is saved by his repudiated child.

I investigated the subject material of "King Lear" in a previous book; I do not propose to deal with it afresh, though I have found much corroborative evidence since I wrote; but I quote this summary here because it forms so valuable a parallel to the subject of which I am going to write.

Let me take my next illustration: the subject of this book.

I find in an Italian author, contemporary with Shakespeare, the following tale:

The hero is a certain Moorish soldier of fortune; he is the native of a desert land where the sun's heat is intense and where there is hardly a waterspring or a village to be found in a day's journey. Owing to the barrenness and heat of this land its people have lived remote from civilization; they are terrific in their passions, and, when they are enraged, no laws of God or man can restrain them. He—the soldier of fortune—is jealous and suspicious to a degree. He is exceedingly valorous; he has travelled and shed his blood in the most distant countries; he has wandered among savages and anthropophagi and across the most stormy seas of the globe. His sword is the most famous sword on earth.

He woos a lovely lady, described sometimes as an Italian lady, sometimes as a Venetian lady; she is, however, of nature wholly diverse from his own; she is more highly civilized; she obeys the laws of God and man; she does right not by restraint and compulsion but from her own inward goodness. She is the most modest of ladies, wholly pure, very trustful, very generous, ready to welcome strangers, ready to give affection to all men, but polluting herself with none and never false to her word. Unfortunately she has one fatal gift: she appre-

ciates and admires strangers more than her own people; this admiration of strangers is the one fatal flaw in her otherwise lovely character.

She is fascinated by the Moorish hero; but, if she weds him, it will be to her ruin and his own. He cannot understand her purity; he will be filled with jealousy and suspicion; he will accuse her of defiling herself; he will murder her, and, little as he may think it, her murder will bring about his own death. He will fall dead by her dead body, and there will be nothing left of these two who were both so noble and so great but corruption and ruin, death and decay.

Anyone can see at a glance the likeness between this story and that of "Othello"; it is a likeness not only in general outline, but also in moral meaning. The source of "Othello" is usually described as being a very little known Italian novel by the novelist Cinthio, a work not translated into English until many years after Shakespeare's death. Now, the story I have quoted is in some ways less like "Othello" than Cinthio's novel, but so far as the characters are concerned and so far as the moral aspect of the story is concerned it has far more likeness to "Othello" than Cinthio's novel.

Now let us ask what this story means for the age of Shakespeare—the early seventeenth century. I have taken the tale from the tracts called the "Philippics" (Filippiche), and pub-

lished *circa* 1615, ascribed in part at least to Alessandro Tassoni; in these tracts he is describing the tragedy of his country—Italy—in the grip of Spain.

The Moorish adventurer is Spain; the lovely lady is Venice—the last free State of Italy—and the subjugation of Venice will therefore mean the total loss of Italian freedom and the ruin of Italy. The author is warning the princes of Italy against permitting Venice to fall under the power of Spain because, if they do, the total destruction of her liberties and of the liberties of the whole of Italy must inevitably follow.

Now let us observe one thing.

Shakespeare's "Othello" undoubtedly treats the same *subject* as that of these "Philippics" ascribed to Tassoni; but it does not in the least follow that the *meaning* is the same. It is quite easy to imagine that Tassoni had come across "Othello," had seen it performed or met someone who had seen it performed, or else that he had come across some close Italian analogue, that he had perceived the story could be used symbolically and had so employed it; but this does not of itself prove that, in Shakespeare's handling, it *possessed* this symbolic value.

Shakespeare and Tassoni undoubtedly deal with the same *subject;* but Shakespeare may have dealt with it purely and simply as a dramatic human story, a story which Tassoni

seized upon and adapted to his own political purposes.

So far, so good. But let us look at "Othello" once again!

The most cursory examination of the play shows us immediately some curiously significant circumstances.

1. Desdemona is publicly repudiated by her father, who announces his repudiation before the Doge and the assembled Senate of Venice (I. iii.). This incident is not found in Cinthio's novel.

2. The possibility of Desdemona's marriage to Othello has to be decided by the assembled Senate of Venice; so has the possibility of Desdemona's accompanying Othello to Cyprus (I. iii.). This again is not found in Cinthio's novel.

3. The nuptial of Desdemona and Othello is celebrated at Cyprus on the very day of the Battle of Lepanto, because we are expressly told in the herald's announcement that the victory over the Turk is also Othello's nuptial day (II. ii.). This, once again, is not found in Cinthio's novel.

4. The State of Venice is *officially* present at all the great crises of Desdemona's life: the Doge and Senate ratify her marriage and give her permission to go to Cyprus. When Othello strikes her and insults her, it is in the presence

of the Venetian ambassador, Lodovico, who at once rebukes Othello, endeavours to protect Desdemona, and announces that Othello's commission from the Senate is withdrawn (IV. i.). The Venetian ambassador, Lodovico, is present at her deathbed (V. ii.). These circumstances, yet again, are not to be found in Cinthio's novel.

5. Desdemona and Othello meet at Cyprus with Cassio, who has assisted Othello in his wooing; who is, when the story opens, Othello's favourite lieutenant, but who is dismissed from favour immediately after the victory over the Turks—*i.e.*, Lepanto—and of whom Othello becomes furiously jealous.

6. Cassio has himself an intrigue with a lady called Bianca, and this intrigue is one of the elements in the tragedy. This final circumstance also is not found in Cinthio.

Now, I submit that these circumstances, especially when taken in combination, suggest in the strongest possible way that the subject of "Othello" had exactly the same meaning for Shakespeare as it had for Tassoni.

Let us deal with the points in order.

1. The Pope was, of course, the recognized 'father' of the Catholic world and therefore of Venice. At the period "Othello" was produced (1604) an impassioned quarrel was proceeding between Venice and the Pope, a quarrel which resulted in a Papal interdict

soon after. The case of Venice excited in 1606 the most intense sympathy among the Protestant Powers of Europe, who regarded Venice as struggling for the rights of secular government against Papal arrogance. James I. took the keenest interest in the whole controversy, and himself published in 1607 a defence of Venice—a defence so ardent that the Venetians did not dare to distribute it even in their own city for fear of exciting the increased wrath of their opponents.

Now, Shakespeare's company, when he wrote "Othello," were the King's Players, and there was thus every reason why he and they should interest themselves in matters in which the King was deeply concerned.

For some time the quarrel between Venice and the Pope was *the* burning question in European politics, and probably interested Englishmen more than any other subject till it was eclipsed by the Gunpowder Plot of 1605. This quarrel was regarded as exceedingly serious from the European point of view because its total result was to isolate Venice and place her at the mercy of Spain. There was every reason why Shakespeare should try to please alike his audience and his King by representing such a subject.

2. The marriage of Desdemona at Venice has to be ratified by the Senate of Venice.

The formal treaty of alliance between Spain and Venice (1571), which Tassoni treats as a kind of symbolic marriage, had, of course, to come before and be ratified by the Senate of Venice. We may note that the treaty of alliance was celebrated as a religious ceremony, sworn as perpetual, and symbolized by uniting the Spanish and Venetian coats-of-arms with a chain.

It was quite customary to term these alliances marriages: thus, in one of her proclamations, Elizabeth speaks of England and the Low Countries as having been man and wife for centuries (1586).

3. The nuptial of Desdemona and Othello is celebrated at Cyprus.

Now, the treaty of alliance between Spain and Venice was occasioned by the loss of Cyprus to the Turks. The Venetians appealed to the Christian Powers for assistance in regaining Cyprus; Spain came to the rescue, and the treaty of alliance which Tassoni and many other patriots regarded as threatening the whole future of Italy was signed in consequence. Throughout the early scenes of Shakespeare's play it is made absolutely clear that it is the question of Cyprus which *forces* the Venetian Senate to regard Othello as of primary importance to them and constrains them therefore to ratify his marriage to Desdemona. Everybody

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What is more, this or similar mythology is a common poetic theme. Thus Spenser's

"Faerie Queene" is really an epic of the religious wars in Europe; "Les Tragiques" is an epic of the religious wars in France; "Tyl Ulenspiegel" is a sort of prose epic of the religious wars in Flanders.

This sixteenth-century mythology was admirably suited to epic treatment, and much of it was just as admirably suited to dramatic treatment. Thus, the conception of an old man, exposed naked to a tempest and driven insane by his suffering, wandering over a desert land where the beasts accumulate and the men decay, accompanied by nothing but his own folly, this really is a superb subject and we can understand that it might appeal to any first-rate tragic dramatist.

The same thing is true of the father who repudiates his noble son and trusts the ignoble son, who, blind in his folly, is about to cast himself to total destruction when he is saved by his repudiated child.

I investigated the subject material of "King Lear" in a previous book; I do not propose to deal with it afresh, though I have found much corroborative evidence since I wrote; but I quote this summary here because it forms so valuable a parallel to the subject of which I am going to write.

Let me take my next illustration: the subject of this book.

I find in an Italian author, contemporary with Shakespeare, the following tale:

The hero is a certain Moorish soldier of fortune; he is the native of a desert land where the sun's heat is intense and where there is hardly a waterspring or a village to be found in a day's journey. Owing to the barrenness and heat of this land its people have lived remote from civilization; they are terrific in their passions, and, when they are enraged, no laws of God or man can restrain them. He—the soldier of fortune—is jealous and suspicious to a degree. He is exceedingly valorous; he has travelled and shed his blood in the most distant countries; he has wandered among savages and anthropophagi and across the most stormy seas of the globe. His sword is the most famous sword on earth.

He woos a lovely lady, described sometimes as an Italian lady, sometimes as a Venetian lady; she is, however, of nature wholly diverse from his own; she is more highly civilized; she obeys the laws of God and man; she does right not by restraint and compulsion but from her own inward goodness. She is the most modest of ladies, wholly pure, very trustful, very generous, ready to welcome strangers, ready to give affection to all men, but polluting herself with none and never false to her word. Unfortunately she has one fatal gift: she appre-

ciates and admires strangers more than her own people; this admiration of strangers is the one fatal flaw in her otherwise lovely character.

She is fascinated by the Moorish hero; but, if she weds him, it will be to her ruin and his own. He cannot understand her purity; he will be filled with jealousy and suspicion; he will accuse her of defiling herself; he will murder her, and, little as he may think it, her murder will bring about his own death. He will fall dead by her dead body, and there will be nothing left of these two who were both so noble and so great but corruption and ruin, death and decay.

Anyone can see at a glance the likeness between this story and that of "Othello"; it is a likeness not only in general outline, but also in moral meaning. The source of "Othello" is usually described as being a very little known Italian novel by the novelist Cinthio, a work not translated into English until many years after Shakespeare's death. Now, the story I have quoted is in some ways less like "Othello" than Cinthio's novel, but so far as the characters are concerned and so far as the moral aspect of the story is concerned it has far more likeness to "Othello" than Cinthio's novel.

Now let us ask what this story means for the age of Shakespeare—the early seventeenth century. I have taken the tale from the tracts called the "Philippics" (Filippiche), and pub-

lished *circa* 1615, ascribed in part at least to Alessandro Tassoni; in these tracts he is describing the tragedy of his country—Italy—in the grip of Spain.

The Moorish adventurer is Spain; the lovely lady is Venice—the last free State of Italy—and the subjugation of Venice will therefore mean the total loss of Italian freedom and the ruin of Italy. The author is warning the princes of Italy against permitting Venice to fall under the power of Spain because, if they do, the total destruction of her liberties and of the liberties of the whole of Italy must inevitably follow.

Now let us observe one thing.

Shakespeare's "Othello" undoubtedly treats the same *subject* as that of these "Philippics" ascribed to Tassoni; but it does not in the least follow that the *meaning* is the same. It is quite easy to imagine that Tassoni had come across "Othello," had seen it performed or met someone who had seen it performed, or else that he had come across some close Italian analogue, that he had perceived the story could be used symbolically and had so employed it; but this does not of itself prove that, in Shakespeare's handling, it *possessed* this symbolic value.

Shakespeare and Tassoni undoubtedly deal with the same *subject;* but Shakespeare may have dealt with it purely and simply as a dramatic human story, a story which Tassoni

seized upon and adapted to his own political purposes.

So far, so good. But let us look at "Othello" once again!

The most cursory examination of the play shows us immediately some curiously significant circumstances.

1. Desdemona is publicly repudiated by her father, who announces his repudiation before the Doge and the assembled Senate of Venice (I. iii.). This incident is not found in Cinthio's novel.

2. The possibility of Desdemona's marriage to Othello has to be decided by the assembled Senate of Venice; so has the possibility of Desdemona's accompanying Othello to Cyprus (I. iii.). This again is not found in Cinthio's novel.

3. The nuptial of Desdemona and Othello is celebrated at Cyprus on the very day of the Battle of Lepanto, because we are expressly told in the herald's announcement that the victory over the Turk is also Othello's nuptial day (II. ii.). This, once again, is not found in Cinthio's novel.

4. The State of Venice is *officially* present at all the great crises of Desdemona's life: the Doge and Senate ratify her marriage and give her permission to go to Cyprus. When Othello strikes her and insults her, it is in the presence

of the Venetian ambassador, Lodovico, who at once rebukes Othello, endeavours to protect Desdemona, and announces that Othello's commission from the Senate is withdrawn (IV. i.). The Venetian ambassador, Lodovico, is present at her deathbed (V. ii.). These circumstances, yet again, are not to be found in Cinthio's novel.

5. Desdemona and Othello meet at Cyprus with Cassio, who has assisted Othello in his wooing; who is, when the story opens, Othello's favourite lieutenant, but who is dismissed from favour immediately after the victory over the Turks—*i.e.*, Lepanto—and of whom Othello becomes furiously jealous.

6. Cassio has himself an intrigue with a lady called Bianca, and this intrigue is one of the elements in the tragedy. This final circumstance also is not found in Cinthio.

Now, I submit that these circumstances, especially when taken in combination, suggest in the strongest possible way that the subject of "Othello" had exactly the same meaning for Shakespeare as it had for Tassoni.

Let us deal with the points in order.

1. The Pope was, of course, the recognized 'father' of the Catholic world and therefore of Venice. At the period "Othello" was produced (1604) an impassioned quarrel was proceeding between Venice and the Pope, a quarrel which resulted in a Papal interdict

soon after. The case of Venice excited in 1606 the most intense sympathy among the Protestant Powers of Europe, who regarded Venice as struggling for the rights of secular government against Papal arrogance. James I. took the keenest interest in the whole controversy, and himself published in 1607 a defence of Venice—a defence so ardent that the Venetians did not dare to distribute it even in their own city for fear of exciting the increased wrath of their opponents.

Now, Shakespeare's company, when he wrote "Othello," were the King's Players, and there was thus every reason why he and they should interest themselves in matters in which the King was deeply concerned.

For some time the quarrel between Venice and the Pope was *the* burning question in European politics, and probably interested Englishmen more than any other subject till it was eclipsed by the Gunpowder Plot of 1605. This quarrel was regarded as exceedingly serious from the European point of view because its total result was to isolate Venice and place her at the mercy of Spain. There was every reason why Shakespeare should try to please alike his audience and his King by representing such a subject.

2. The marriage of Desdemona at Venice has to be ratified by the Senate of Venice.

The formal treaty of alliance between Spain and Venice (1571), which Tassoni treats as a kind of symbolic marriage, had, of course, to come before and be ratified by the Senate of Venice. We may note that the treaty of alliance was celebrated as a religious ceremony, sworn as perpetual, and symbolized by uniting the Spanish and Venetian coats-of-arms with a chain.

It was quite customary to term these alliances marriages: thus, in one of her proclamations, Elizabeth speaks of England and the Low Countries as having been man and wife for centuries (1586).

3. The nuptial of Desdemona and Othello is celebrated at Cyprus.

Now, the treaty of alliance between Spain and Venice was occasioned by the loss of Cyprus to the Turks. The Venetians appealed to the Christian Powers for assistance in regaining Cyprus; Spain came to the rescue, and the treaty of alliance which Tassoni and many other patriots regarded as threatening the whole future of Italy was signed in consequence. Throughout the early scenes of Shakespeare's play it is made absolutely clear that it is the question of Cyprus which *forces* the Venetian Senate to regard Othello as of primary importance to them and constrains them therefore to ratify his marriage to Desdemona. Everybody

in the play is concerned in the marriage more or less.

In Cinthio's novel, Cyprus is mentioned only, and has little to do with the action.

4. The State of Venice is *officially* present at all the great crises of Desdemona's life.

When Othello strikes her, insults her, and accuses her, it is at once the Venetian ambassador who warmly protests and takes her part; Othello's repudiation by Venice coincides with this and takes place as part of the same scene.

The Venetian ambassador is also present at Desdemona's death-bed.

I regard these scenes, especially, as the crucial points of the whole drama; they suggest that Shakespeare is not merely treating the same *subject* as Tassoni, but with the same *meaning.* These most significant scenes, with the Doge and Senate of Venice and with the Venetian ambassador, do not, *any* of them, occur in Shakespeare's so-called source in Cinthio's novel; Shakespeare has added them all himself and they suggest that, whatever may be the case with the original novel, Shakespeare is altering it to fit it to the same *meaning* as Tassoni's interpretation of the tale.

5. Desdemona and Othello meet at Cyprus with Cassio, who had assisted Othello in his wooing, who is Othello's trusted officer, but who is dismissed by him and who is also the

person of whom Othello becomes furiously jealous.

Now the person who commanded the united Venetian and Spanish fleets at the Battle of Lepanto (1571), which redeemed Cyprus from the Turks, was Don John of Austria, a man then high in the favour of Philip II., but who, soon after Lepanto, lost that favour and was disgraced; a person of whom Philip later on became furiously jealous, since he suspected him of desiring to make himself an independent kingdom of Italy. His jealousy of Don John seems to date from Lepanto itself.

Brantôme, for instance ("Don Juan d'Austrie"), declares that Philip murdered Don John because he was convinced his brother wished to make himself King of Flanders, Naples, and Milan. This was the commonly accepted belief in the sixteenth century; certainly Philip's jealousy of Don John dated from Lepanto itself.

6. Cassio has an intrigue with a person called Bianca, and this intrigue has an important share in bringing about the tragedy.

Now, the national party in Italy were known as the 'Bianchi' or 'Whites'; they aimed at getting rid of the Spanish garrison, and Don John, if he aimed at making himself King of Milan and Naples, would certainly be in league with them. Surely all these are very remarkable coincidences?

Nor is this all! Let us put another question. The central point in the whole intrigue of "Othello" is the lost handkerchief; it is, as an episode, most curiously and strangely distinctive.

Is there any such episode in Spanish history, well known to the England of Shakespeare's day, and on which similar issues did indeed turn? The answer is: 'Most certainly there was such an episode, and neither Shakespeare nor the greater part of his audience could possibly have been ignorant of it or of its curious bearing on the destiny of Italy.'

No less a person than William the Silent in his famous "Apology"* (1580) accused Philip II. of Spain of having murdered his French wife, Elizabeth of Valois, and of having by this murder prepared the way for the subjugation of Italy, since it made possible his next alliance with the Austrian Hapsburgs and thus completed the encirclement of Venice.

William the Silent does not give the details of this supposed murder, but Antonio Perez—Philip's ex-minister and chief enemy—told them to all Europe.

The substance of this tale, which was accepted by all contemporary French historians and by the greater part of Europe, was as follows: the Queen, Elizabeth of Valois, was one of the most beautiful women of her day; the King was

* See, for authorship, p. 64.

passionately enamoured of her, wholly devoted to her, and intensely jealous; so well known was his jealousy that the Spanish nobles hardly dared to raise their eyes to the Queen's face for fear of bringing disaster upon themselves. One of Elizabeth's ladies had an intrigue with a gallant and very rashly admitted him to the royal apartments; the King heard of it, suspected the gallant of being the lover of the Queen and set a watch.

Unfortunately the Queen dropped her handkerchief and the gallant picked it up; the King saw it in his hands, took it as proof positive of the Queen's guilt, and determined on the death of both.

According to Antonio Perez, Philip had the gallant murdered in the street and then himself murdered the Queen, killing her with his own hands in her bed.

Now Shakespeare could not possibly be ignorant of this tale; Antonio Perez, whose version I quote, had been in England as the protégé of Essex, and Shakespeare, in all human probability, had known him personally. Nor could Shakespeare's audience have been ignorant of, at any rate, the main outline of the story. William the Silent had sent his "Apology" to every Court in Europe; it was one of the most important State documents of the whole sixteenth century, the more important because

it led up to the declaration in which the States of Holland announced their independence (1582). In this "Apology" William compares the Spaniards to Moors for their ferocity and jealousy, and accuses Philip of the murder of his wife. The Antonio Perez version of the story would certainly be well known to everyone likely to be connected with the Court. In fact, hardly any educated person in Europe could be ignorant of the main outline of the tale, for, in one form or another, it was a commonplace with the Protestant historians and pamphleteers, and even with the Catholics if they happened to be anti-Spanish.

A leading modern historian of Philip II., C. Bratli, declares that William the Silent and Antonio Perez between them fixed the character of Philip II. as known to all contemporary Europe.

If they did, they certainly, between them, fixed the character of Philip as that of an intensely jealous man who murdered his beloved and innocent wife because of a dropped handkerchief, and William the Silent certainly stamped in the impression that this murder led to the overthrow of Italian liberties.

Surely we have what is, at least, a strong case for investigation? Surely it is impossible to deny that these events may have *some* relation to Shakespeare's play?

I believe that in both these cases, in "King Lear" and in "Othello," we have an illustration of Shakespeare's literary method, which is also the method of Spenser, of Agrippa D'Aubigné, of Pierre Mathieu, and of numberless other writers of his age. His subject is a *human* story of *human* interest, a real story taken from real life; but it is also a story which is made the symbol of a *national* destiny. Shakespeare can combine the two with perfect justice because the national destiny did often, as a matter of fact, turn on the same personality, and even on the same traits in that personality, as the individual tragedy. Thus, if the Gloucester of "King Lear" really corresponds to Henry III. of France, it was his personal character which caused both his own individual tragedy and the tragedy of his realm. The same thing is true of "Othello"; jealousy, suspicion, and subservience to evil counsellors were the cause of the personal tragedies of the Spanish Court, and they were also the cause of the national tragedies in countries subject to Spanish rule.

The point I wish to stress and to reiterate again and again, since it is all-important for the full comprehension of Shakespeare, is that there exists a vast body of contemporary mythology relating to the history of the time, and

which was common, more or less, to all the countries of Europe. We find it in England, in France, in Holland, in Italy, in Spain. Spenser's "Faerie Queene" and a good part of Shakespeare's plays are, I am convinced, simply portions of this European mythology which was employed, more or less, by all contemporary poets and by the vast majority of the historians and pamphleteers.* This mythology was full of intensely living, vivid, and dramatic motives, and, quite apart from its political interest to the audience, it offered an abundance, an inexhaustible abundance, of noble themes to the dramatist.

In the case of Spenser's "Faerie Queene," Spenser himself explains repeatedly that his work has an historical meaning; he does so in the Introductory Letter to Sir Walter Raleigh, in the Introduction to Book II., etc.:

> And thou, O fayrest Princesse under sky!
> In this fayre mirrhour maist behold thy face,
> And thine own realmes in lond of Faery
> And in this antique ymage thy great auncestry
> (*Book II., Intro.*).
>
> Ne let his fayrest Cynthia refuse
> In mirrhours more than one her selfe to see;
> But either Gloriana let her choose,
> Or in Belphœbe fashioned to bee;
> In th' one her rule, in th' other her rare chastitee.
> (*Book III., Intro.*).

* It was expressed in traditional forms—*i.e.*, older stories—whenever possible.

We have here Spenser's own direct statement that he is really depicting England in his poem and that both Gloriana and Belphœbe are meant as representations of Elizabeth.

It is very generally agreed that Spenser's Red Cross Knight (Book I.) represents England, that Orgoglio and Mammon represent Spain, that Irené is Ireland, Belgé is Belgium, and so forth.

Moreover, let us note that Orgoglio and Mammon represent both Philip II. of Spain and Spain itself; the poet is perfectly justified in this method of treatment because, as a matter of fact, Philip II. of Spain was regarded, both by his own people and by the other nations of Europe, as a sort of incarnation of the genius of Spain.

Similarly, Britomart is Elizabeth and England and the virtue of Chastity as well.

Now, one of my critics blamed me for applying a system admittedly true of Spenser to Shakespeare. He did not deny that Spenser's poem was made up of this peculiar kind of mythology, but Spenser, he said, was an archaist and an eccentric who stood alone in his age. *This is simply untrue.* Spenser is exactly and accurately representative of the mind of the sixteenth century. The poets of his age are not all as purely mythological as Spenser, but they all employ his method in greater or less

degree. A type of mythology closely similar to Spenser's is found in Drayton's "Polyolbion," in Ben Jonson's "Masques," in the "Masques" of Beaumont, in the Pageants written by Thomas Middleton, in the panegyrical poems of George Peele, of Thomas Watson, and the Earl of Essex, in a great part of the work of Dekker, including, for instance, "The Whore of Babylon," in almost all the entertainments composed for Elizabeth upon her progresses, numbering many scores, in hundreds of complimentary poems addressed to James I., in the entertainments offered for his accession, for his birthdays, in the entertainments for the installation of Henry, Prince of Wales, for the installation of Charles, for the marriage of the Princess Elizabeth, etc. The same kind of mythology is found in practically all the pageants written for the City of London, in most of those for Oxford and Cambridge and for the Inns of Court, and in the great majority of the political writers and pamphleteers.

The most miscellaneous productions—George Peele's "Installation Ode for the Knights of the Garter," the complimentary poems written for the Chancellors of Oxford and Cambridge, pamphlets on the Union of the Crowns, elegies on Sir Philip Sidney and Prince Henry, even, most amazing of all, many of the proclamations —are written in pure mythology.

It is the typical method also of most of the great sixteenth-century Frenchmen. The chief French epic of the age, Agrippa D'Aubigné's "Les Tragiques," is made up of such mythology; it represents Catherine de Médici as a sort of Medea, brewing hell-broth and digging corpses out of the grave with her nails; it represents the Civil Wars of France as tempests through which its heroes wander naked. It is also the method of Pierre Mathieu, alike in his histories and in his poems; his so-called history, "The Glorious Life and Deplorable Death of Henry IV." (1610), is almost as pure mythology, though written in prose, as Spenser's "Faerie Queene." This mythological method is the method of the anonymous Huguenot authors of the "Memoires de l'Estat de France sous Charles IX." (1576), the "Avant-Victorieux," by D'Hostal de Roquebonne (1610), and of hundreds upon hundreds of minor poets, panegyrists, and pamphleteers.

It is also the method of many Italian writers; for instance, of Boccalini in his "Touchstone of Politics" (1610), of his "New-Found Politic" (1613), and of Alessandro Tassoni in his "Philippics" (*circa* 1615).

It is also the method of the Flamands, for "Tyl Ulenspiegel" is written throughout in a kind of mythology; so also is Van Dans's "De Laudibus Elizabethæ," a Latin poem on Eliza-

beth and the Armada; but it was, indeed, a common form in the Low Countries.

Surely we ought to take account, in judging the dramatists, of this vast sixteenth and seventeenth-century mythology which we meet everywhere—in State documents such as William the Silent's "Apology," in proclamations such as that on the death of the Jew Lopez (in the Burleigh Papers), or that on joining the war in the Low Countries (1586), in private letters such as those of Henry IV. of France, in political tracts such as "The Anti-Spaniard," the "Fleur-de-Lys," etc., in historians such as Pierre Mathieu, De Thou, and Agrippa D'Aubigné, in panegyrics, elegies, etc.—up to the chief epic poets of the age, Spenser and D'Aubigné; there certainly exists this vast mythology, and a good many of Shakespeare's plays bear the closest possible resemblance to portions of it.

The truth is, one must insist, that this metaphoric style was almost universal in the sixteenth century. I have quoted a few examples in the foregoing pages; I gave many examples in my previous books; I shall give numerous others in the pages which follow; but I wish to impress upon the reader that I cannot give even a hundredth part of the parallels which I have found.

For twenty years and more I have been studying the sixteenth century, and every year the evidence accumulates that the men of that age possessed an immense mass of mythology relating to the history of their own times and embracing practically every country in Europe.

Who invented the mythology? The answer is that practically everyone lent a hand, from kings and statesmen down to the ballad-mongers who sang ballads by the wayside. The greatest poets, no doubt, did the largest share of the inventing, and Shakespeare shaped it more nobly and beautifully than anyone else, but the material was everywhere and everyone had a share in it.

William the Silent in his famous "Apology" (1580) certainly either invented or gave currency to a great deal of the mythology concerning himself and Philip II. of Spain.

It was he who did much to personify the Spaniards as Moors and Philip as the murderer of his wife, and also as a Jew trafficking in the living flesh and blood of men as if it were the flesh and blood of beasts, and as rending asunder the living bodies of his unhappy victims.

Contemporary pamphlets take up and employ these ideas concerning both Philip and the Duke of Alva; Alva is a usurer, of more than Jewish hardness of heart, and a mutilator of the living bodies of his victims.

Agrippa D'Aubigné also takes up this mythology, and in "Les Tragiques" represents the Spaniards as Moors and Philip as murdering his wife, and compares Philip to a Jew cutting out the entrails of his enemies with the knife of slander.

"Tyl Ulenspiegel" invents a mythology about Philip as a spider or weaver of webs, in which men are taken. Spenser has a whole vast mythology; Philip is with him Archimage, the weaver of plots, Orgoglio the giant, Mammon the miser, Geryon the monster, etc. This mythology concerning Philip II. would, if adequately treated, require volumes to itself alone.

The Duke of Alva has also a vast and terrific mythology of his own; he is a monster who devours the living bodies of men, he is a usurer, he is a Jew, he mutilates and carves the living flesh, he sets a price on living flesh and blood which he buys like the carcasses of sheep.

Henry of Navarre has, again, a most comprehensive mythology, of which he himself invented a great deal; he was responsible for the idea that he was attended always by a genius or an airy spirit who listened secretly to all the designs of his enemies and revealed them to him; he was responsible for the idea that his servants were winged and flew through the air; he was responsible also for the identification of

himself as a modern Hercules, a wrestler, and a lion slayer.

Another tremendous mythology surrounds Mary, Queen of Scots, her husband, Darnley, and her lover, Bothwell. The historian Buchanan, James VI.'s own tutor, seems to have invented a good deal of this, but much of it he undoubtedly found in popular ballads and prints. As I have previously shown, Shakespeare seems to have drawn upon this mythology found in the "Detection of Mary, Queen of Scots," and in the "Oration" appended very largely for the material of his "Macbeth" and "King Lear." James himself must, with such a tutor, have been educated from his youth up in a view of his mother which regarded her as a sort of combination of Goneril, Lady Macbeth, and Medea.

Belleforest and Adam Blackwood carried this Mary, Queen of Scots mythology still further, and in particular compared Darnley's murder to the murder of Duffe by Donwald, the very crime which is the central theme of "Macbeth."*

John Knox also adds to this mythology concerning Mary, Queen of Scots; he calls her a mermaid, enticing men by her beauty and her flattering songs, and compares the thick mist which overspread Scotland on the day of her

* See "Macbeth, King Lear, and Contemporary History."

arrival to the mist of error which she brought with her when she came. Both these ideas, the mermaids with their enchantments and the mist, are employed by Spenser in his description of Acrasia's bower in his "Faerie Queene" (II. xii.).

Many of the historians of the age write almost wholly in this peculiar mythology. As I have said, P. Mathieu's book, "The Glorious Life and Deplorable Death of Henry IV." (1610), is simply a storehouse of the mythology concerning Henry of Navarre. De Thou, Agrippa D'Aubigné, and many others are crammed with mythology concerning Catherine de Médici, Charles IX, the Guises, Philip II., Mary, Queen of Scots, and Bothwell, etc. Henry III. of France is the subject of another tremendous mythology, found in Agrippa D'Aubigné, in the Satyre Menippée, and in hosts of anonymous pamphleteers; a mythology which represents him as a Ganymede, a Proteus, a practitioner of the Black Mass, a wizard, and a devil.

Elizabeth is the subject of another vast mythology; when this is Spanish it is obscene and shocking to a degree better imagined than described; when it is Huguenot or English or Dutch it is full of radiant compliment. Spenser's first instalment of the "Faerie Queene" in 1590 produced a whole literature, found in complimentary addresses, entertain-

ments written for progresses, etc., in which Elizabeth is described as a fairy queen attended by fairy knights, who fly through the air on her service, serenade her with music, or present her with flowers, or as a moon goddess haunting the night with her revellers, or as both combined. She nearly always bears one of the names of Diana, such as Cynthia or Titania.

George Peele has a very amusing "Installation Ode" for the Knights of the Garter, which represents the most staid and serious noblemen of the realm as flying round Windsor Castle by moonlight on their fairy steeds and serenading their Queen.

Dekker has a whole play, "The Whore of Babylon," whose scene is laid in a fairy island, which is England, and which is defended by magic storms, and where the whole empire of Spain suffers shipwreck; the heroine is "Titania, Queen of the Fairies," whom Dekker himself defines as 'our late Queen Elizabeth.'

So also there is a large contemporary mythology concerning James I., found in complimentary poems (both Latin and English), in political tracts on the Union, in the masques presented to him on his accession, in Ben Jonson's masques, etc. He is represented as being an oracle of wisdom; he dwells in a cave because he is like the oracle of Apollo; the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries regularly

confused Delphi with Delphos, and Sir William Vaughan in his "Golden Fleece" represents James I. as "the oracle of Apollo in the Island of Delphos." Sometimes he is regarded as a sort of Merlin, ruling a fairy race in an enchanted isle, guarded by tempests against all his enemies, with a passion for books, and a wide control of benevolent magic.

There is also a mythology concerning Sir Francis Walsingham, as we find in Thomas Watson's elegy on him, a very large one on Sir Philip Sidney expressed in complimentary poems and elegies, and another still larger on Prince Henry, expressed in masques and complimentary poems during his lifetime and in elegies after his death.

Drake has a wonderful and very large mythology; to the Spaniards he was a dragon, a wizard, and a devil; he kept a whole legion of devils in his employ who raised tempests for him whenever tempests were useful against Spain. To the English, Drake was a magic being, a spirit all of air and fire, swifter than anything else upon earth, he 'put a girdle round the globe'; this last phrase is repeatedly employed—for instance, by Thomas Middleton in his masques for the City of London—as if it were a part of Drake's style, and his coat-of-arms also shows 'the girdle round the globe.' He is represented as winged because of the

swiftness of his ships; he is all fire and air; he wields the lightning and the thunder because of his artillery; he fights with fire because of the fire-ships; he commands the spirits of the waters; he is attended by music because of his habit of taking with him wherever he went 'a concert of viols.' All these images and many more will be found in the English elegies upon him, and in Dutch poems such as Van Dans's "De Laudibus Elizabethæ."

It is curious that even the political pamphlets, English, French, and Italian alike, are written largely in this mythology. I may quote here a passage from an unpublished essay, kindly lent to me by Mr. G. H. Green, in which he deals with the methods of producing popular convictions.

"The process of conviction," says Mr. Green, "is not a rational one, but something very different. To appear convincing, material has to be shaped into the form of a story, already well known and accepted, already proved to possess the power to evoke emotion and to call to action, with the man to whom you appeal as the central figure.

"News, reported as such, is dull and tame. It quickens no man's blood. It stirs no emotions. It fails because it is not of the form of those things to which the blood and the emotions have learned to respond."

Now, the sixteenth-century pamphleteers knew fully the value of the principle enunciated above, which Mr. Green asserts to exist in all skilled publicists. They do not so much argue with their public as appeal to their emotions, and they do this by casting the matter they are dealing with in certain traditional forms, which nearly always means some highly dramatic story.

The political tracts of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries form what is practically a literature of their own; C. Bratli says that they corresponded to the modern newspaper and were probably more widely read that any other type of publication and profoundly influenced thought. What is more, these tracts formed an international literature; many of them published in France and Holland were translated at once into English and *vice versa.* Many of them bear a marked resemblance to certain portions of Shakespeare's plays, and I cannot but believe that our Shakespearian criticism would have been very deeply influenced had we known the real contents of the popular mind in Shakespeare's day.

The "Paræneticall Treatise," by a Pilgrim-Spaniard, the "Fleur-de-Lys," the "Anti-Spaniard," and many others appeared in both French and English at the same time. They nearly always compare the Spaniards to Moors

and Jews, accuse Philip of the murder of his wife, of buying living flesh and blood as if it were beef or mutton, of cutting the living flesh of his victims, etc.

Tassoni's "Philippics" I have already referred to; they are essentially a mythology representing Spain as a Moorish soldier of fortune, a barbarian of inferior race wooing the noble and accomplished Venetian lady as his bride. The pamphlets put, that is, a political motive into a traditional form of romance and attempt to arouse the emotions of the Italian princes by using the well-worn theme of the black man winning the confidence of the white woman and then ill-treating and murdering her.

Boccalini's works, "The Touchstone of Politics" (1610) and "The New-Found Politic" (1613), are practically political tracts and are couched throughout in this mythology. They also compare the Spaniards to Moors, or blacks, or 'dusky people,' and the Italians to a white race entrapped into their power. It is a constantly recurring motive in all these tracts, whether Italian or French or English or Portuguese. The Spaniards are continually treated as a 'black' race, and the white race in their power is a bride wooed and enticed at first, only to be destroyed later by their boundless ferocity.

Now, the epic poets deal with a popular mind

full of these traditional forms adapted to political purposes or religious purposes and very naturally employ them.

This helps to explain the form of Spenser's "Faerie Queene"; the new motives are, all of them, expressed in the traditional forms; thus England defending the true faith becomes the Red Cross Knight defending the Lady Una; England in the power of Spain becomes the Red Cross Knight in the dungeons of Orgoglio; England relapsing into the Catholic faith becomes the Red Cross Knight in the power of the harlot—enchantress—Duessa. It is the same with Agrippa D'Aubigné's "Les Tragiques"; the French epic poet uses the traditional motives in dealing with the religious wars of his own country; being a classically educated man, appealing to other people with a classical education, he very frequently employs the Greek forms; thus, he takes the Œdipus myth, the idea of the sons quarrelling and destroying each other, and applies it to the factions of the Civil Wars in France; he takes the myth of Medea and applies it in all its most horrible details to Catherine de Médici, who becomes also a gorgon, a basilisk, and many other traditional forms of evil. Agrippa D'Aubigné explains, as he goes along, the exact meaning of his mythology; he is able to be far more candid than Spenser because he never published his

poem until he was in exile and had nothing further to lose.

The same thing is true of "Tyl Uleṇspiegel," the prose epic of Flanders; it embodies a vast number of traditional forms adapted to the contemporary purpose of the author.

It is literally *impossible* to separate Shakespeare's mentality from the mentality of his age, and we must remember, at every step, how greatly it differed from our own.

Thus it was a regular custom, taken over from Latin and late Latin literature, to personify countries and cities as individuals. As Professor Rose tells me, the *genius loci* in Latin might be any country or any province of any country or any city. It certainly is so in the sixteenth century.

Thus, upon the accession of James I., masques are presented before him, in one of which he is shown as marrying England, who becomes his bride; or he is shown as marrying the City of London; or, again, Scotland and England are married, but in this case it is England who is the bridegroom and Scotland who is the bride.

There is a very interesting sixteenth-century pamphlet entitled "An Address from England to her Three Daughters," the three daughters being respectively Oxford and Cambridge and the Inns of Court. Oxford is represented not

only as a lady, but also as an Amazon, because of her great conflicts with the rival Catholic learning.

So also with the City of London. Practically every pageant written for the City of London—including, for example, those of Thomas Middleton—represents London as a woman; sometimes she is described quite obviously as '*genius loci*'; sometimes she is described as the 'daughter of Brutus the Trojan,' etc.

Sometimes the personality of the country is strongly coloured, as we should expect, by the personality of the ruler. Professor Rose thinks this a natural deduction from the Latin idea of the deified emperor and the Roman custom of worshipping the deified emperor; the Romans did not *identify* the genius of the emperor with the genius of the country, but neither did they clearly distinguish between them.

It certainly is so in the sixteenth century. I defy anybody to study the contemporary panegyrics of Elizabeth and to say precisely where the personality of the Queen ends and the personality of England begins. Spenser purposely distinguished between Gloriana, who is Elizabeth as a queen, and Belphœbe, who is Elizabeth as a woman, but even he did not explain which was most prominent in Britomart.

It is the same with the Frenchmen. It is literally impossible to study the Huguenot

elegies on Coligny in the "Memoires de l'Estat de France sous Charles IX." and say precisely where the personality of Coligny ends and the personality of France begins; or to study the panegyrics of Henry of Navarre as written by Salluste du Bartas, P. Mathieu, de Roqubonne, and Malherbe and say precisely where the personality of Henry ends and the personality of France begins.

We find the same personifying of their country and their country's enemies in the Low Countries. As I have already said, and as the author himself explains, Tyl Ulenspiegel *is* the genius of Flanders; he expresses the many-sided gifts of his country; he is a jester, a musician, a poet, an architect, a carver in wood, a happy bourgeois, and he becomes deeply religious and a patient soldier.

So also with the Portuguese. The unhappy titular King, Don Antonio, becomes Portugal itself, Portugal whose ships are lost, Portugal who is bankrupt, Portugal whose living flesh and blood is bought for a price, Portugal whose living flesh is hacked in pieces by Spain.

So is Spain personified, not once, but hundreds and hundreds of times, as a Jew or a Moor. Alva's cruelty in wringing taxes from the Low Countries causes him to be represented as a usurer. Spain is an alien in Holland, in Portugal, in Italy, and that alien is almost

always represented as unchristian or only falsely Christian; sometimes Spain is a Christian of the synagogue or a Jew, sometimes a Christian of the Koran or a Moor. In Trajano Boccalini's "Touchstone of Politics," Spain is personified as a woman and a Moor. In Tassoni's "Philippics" (as I have already pointed out) Spain is personified as a Moorish adventurer winning his kingdom by the sword.

The character of Philip II. as he was in his later years causes Spain very frequently to be personified as sombre, melancholy, and solitary; sometimes the murder of Elizabeth of Valois causes Spain to be personified as an intensely jealous lover or a jealous husband.

It is the same with the Italian States. The great Venetian painters continually represented their republic as a beautiful woman, noble, graceful, and full of charm, as in Veronese's great picture of 'Venice Crowned.' So does Boccalini personify Venice as 'our lovely lady of Venice,' and Genoa as 'our lovely lady of Genoa.' So does Tassoni personify Venice as particularly chaste, modest, and quiet.

Another thing necessary to remember about sixteenth-century literature is that it nearly always starts from the type and not from the individual. Spenser, for instance, gives us the 'idea' or 'type' of the temperate man whom

he incarnates in 'Guyon,' the 'idea' or 'type' of the just man whom he incarnates in Artegall, the idea of the magnanimous man whom he incarnates in Arthur. Ben Jonson, again, starts from the type rather than from the individual, and his comedy of humours is essentially a comedy of types. What is more, this method of studying character by types is the common method not only in the sixteenth century but throughout the seventeenth, as a reference to the seventeenth-century books of characters, written by Earle, Overbury, Butler, etc., will speedily show.

Now, where does Shakespeare stand? We should surely expect him either to resemble an earlier contemporary like Spenser, or a later contemporary like Ben Jonson, and, in either case, he would start from the type, and this is precisely what I believe he does. In my previous books I have tried to show that Macbeth, Lear, and Hamlet are all of them characters representing types rather than individuals.

Similarly, I believe that the peculiar greatness of Shakespeare's "Othello" is due to the fact that he incarnates the supreme type of the Spanish nation, the 'idea' of Spain, as it were, rather than any one individual.

It is impossible to believe that a hero so fascinatingly, overwhelmingly, tragically great as Othello was really suggested by nothing

more than a sort of Newgate Calendar murder in Cinthio.

Shakespeare's great figures, in fact, are as essentially superhuman as the sibyls and prophets of Michael Angelo; all the elements are human, but there is something in the total effect that is more than humanity. Michael Angelo belonged to an earlier generation but still to the same age as Shakespeare.

The method of starting from the type and not from the individual marks an important difference in literary psychology. The men of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries aimed at a universal truth as distinguished from a local and individual truth. They aimed not at expressing an individual in all his eccentricities, but at taking from an individual that which was universally true for his particular type, and therefore would be always valid. I believe that this was exactly what they succeeded in doing, for Elizabethan literature is, take it on the whole, more universally true than that of any other period which has succeeded.

As for Shakespeare 'universal truth' is just precisely what everyone ascribes to him, and, if he resembles the majority of his contemporaries, it would be precisely that at which he aimed; if he were, like most of his contemporaries, a Platonist, his desire would be to set the 'eternal idea' free from its accidents; to take real life

indeed, incessantly, and always real life, but to abstract from it just that which was universally valid. He was, in fact, the supreme practitioner of an exceedingly difficult literary method.

We should also remember how intensely religious the men of the sixteenth century usually were and how their religion was, in practice, closely united with their national politics. Religion itself was, in the sixteenth century, sufficiently powerful as a motive force; but when Catholicism became identified, as to a large extent it did, with the nationality of Spain, and Protestantism with the nationality of England and Holland, there was a great reinforcement of the religious idea. The kind of religious indifference which is usually ascribed to Shakespeare, indifferent as between Catholic and Protestant, indifferent as between Christian and non-Christian, generally agnostic and sceptical in his attitude towards the universe—such indifference was, in the sixteenth century, most abnormal and most rare. What is more, it was practically impossible to a man who was a strong English nationalist, because, in that case, he was almost compelled, if for national reasons only, to be an impassioned Protestant. Now we know, for all the historical dramas show it, that Shakespeare was one of the most impassioned English nationalists of his age,

and being that, it was practically impossible for him to be either dispassionate or indifferent to the religious problem as a whole.

Nor was this all! The men of the sixteenth century regarded all human history, their own contemporary history included, as a continuation of the Bible; it was the progressive revelation of God's judgments in dealing with men. Such is the conception of human history as we find it in nearly all the leading writers of the time; in the Preface to Sir Walter Raleigh's "History of the World," in Spenser's "Faerie Queene," in Agrippa D'Aubigné's "Les Tragiques" and in his "Histoire Universelle," in De Thou's history, in Duplessis-Mornay, etc. The minor chroniclers and the pamphleteers, Catholic and Protestant alike, hold the same point of view.

Shakespeare, I am convinced, is truly a man of his time; he would be likely to take the same view of history as that taken by Bacon, by Raleigh, by D'Aubigné, by William the Silent, by Hubert Languet, by Duplessis-Mornay, etc. Everyone who has read the Elizabethan Chroniclers, Holinshed, Fabyan, and the rest, knows that they start with the Bible as the beginning of human history, proceed to that of Greece and Rome, and so on to their own age, marking at no place any real break.

There is every probability that Shakespeare regarded human history as a progressive revelation of God's judgments upon human kind; this view is quite explicit in "Richard III.," where the terrible crimes of Richard are permitted as judgments upon the guilty house of York, though his own punishment is decreed in the end. It is also the view taken in "Henry V.," where Henry himself continually appeals to the arbitrement of heaven and promises atonement for the murder of Richard II., which otherwise as, partly, at any rate, due to the crime of his father, might bring destruction upon him.

Shakespeare, in fact, in his historical plays takes exactly the view of European history expressed by Raleigh in his preface to the "History of the World"; the tragedies of the individual Kings are due to God's judgments upon their crimes or the crimes of their families.

Shakespeare would regard all the history of contemporary Europe as a continuation of the Bible, and it is in that sense that I regard Shakespeare's plays as historical plays. Popular opinion has always counted Shakespeare's plays as ranking next after the Bible; I believe popular opinion to be profoundly right, and that he himself aimed at neither more nor less than that. If it be said that this is too daring even for him I can only ask, 'Why should he be less daring

than Spenser and Raleigh and D'Aubigné?' Was he less great? Was his mind less comprehensive?

I believe Shakespeare's great tragedies to be as essentially and profoundly religious as those of any Greek, of any Æschylus or Sophocles.

In my previous book, "Macbeth, King Lear, and Contemporary History," I tried to show that Shakespeare had drawn the greater part of his material for those dramas from the symbolic representation of contemporary history as presented by Buchanan and other writers; he was dealing with two great historic crimes—the Darnley murder and the St. Bartholomew massacre—and with the divine retribution exacted for those crimes; moreover, the crimes themselves, being part of a Guise-Spanish plot against Europe, threatened the whole of the national destinies of England, Scotland, and France, and those three countries were all of them saved by the divine retribution exacted for these crimes. If Shakespeare linked these two crimes together in the same dramas, as I believe he did, he was only accepting a connection regarded as fixed and inevitable by the mind of his age; practically all contemporary historians—for instance, D'Aubigné, and the authors of the "Memoires de l'Estat de France sous Charles IX."—consider both these crimes as part of the same Spanish plot against Europe.

I believe the same thing to be essentially true of "Othello"; it is a study of divine retribution alike upon Philip II. of Spain and upon Spain, and of the still more tragic retribution that will follow if the political murder of Italy is consummated.

The Elizabethan stage grew out of a drama that was definitely religious, and the Elizabethan stage still remains nobly and profoundly serious.

Some critics thought I depreciated Shakespeare by finding contemporary sources for so many of his ideas, but surely this is to misunderstand the essential nature of great poetry, The more the poem includes the greater the genius of the writer.

Does anyone in his senses suppose that Homer invented the entire contents of the Homeric epics? The Greeks, at any rate, valued him largely for a quite opposite reason—because they conceived him as manifesting the truth of their ancient history. Modern Homeric scholars would probably agree that there was an historic foundation, and they certainly believe that there was a great deal of pre-Homeric material, cycles of ballads or cycles of sagas whose substance is embodied in the great epics. No one supposes that the *material* is the invention of the poet.

It is the same with Dante. Does anyone in his senses suppose that Dante invented the whole of the material and all the ideas of the "Divina Commedia"? On the contrary. As Carlyle justly said: 'In Dante thirteen silent centuries find a voice.'

The truth is that Homer is not a man but an era; he is a whole glorious and noble era of the human spirit which, without him, would have sunk into oblivion.

Dante, also, is not a man, but an era. There is a sense, and a very important sense, too, in which all the Middle Ages, the whole of Italy, and the whole of the great Roman past have helped Dante to write his poem. It would not have been what it is without Virgil, or without Rome, without the Mediæval Church, or without the glorious flowering of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Dante is one of the greatest poets of the world because he is not so much an individual as an era.

It is the same with Shakespeare; he is not only a man, he is an era of the human spirit; there is a sense, and a very important sense, in which the whole of the sixteenth century and every country in Europe have helped Shakespeare to write his plays.

And, finally, I would point out that the current criticism of Shakespeare cannot be ex-

haustive because the critics can point *to no single contemporary analysis of any one of his plays which confirms in any way their point of view.*

They have Meres's list (a bare list only) of twelve dramas which he ascribes to Shakespeare, they have a few contemporary notices of performances of plays (for the most part by people who do not know the author to be Shakespeare), and they have Manningham's contemptuous notice of "Twelfth Night" as a silly story which has a likeness to the play in Italian called "Inganni." *There is not a single analysis of any play whatever.*

Now this I find frankly incredible. Shakespeare lived in an age unusually sensitive to poetry; he was not only the greatest genius of all time, he had the additional advantage of being the fashionable favourite of two monarchs. It is incredible that Shakespeare's contemporaries paid so little attention to his plays. But where, then, *are* the contemporary references?

I need not challenge my critics to produce these references because I know they have done their best; but the results as accumulated even in that model of unwearied and patient labour, Sir Sidney Lee's "Life of Shakespeare," are meagre in the extreme.

On the other hand, if my interpretation of the

plays be correct, then contemporary references to them are very numerous indeed and occur not only in English, but in French and Italian as well, showing that Shakespeare possessed a European reputation in his own day, and was, indeed, one of the chief intellectual and moral forces of his age; a conclusion which I think infinitely more probable.

"OTHELLO" AS THE TRAGEDY OF ITALY

"OTHELLO" AS THE TRAGEDY OF ITALY

As I have just explained in the Introduction, there existed in the sixteenth century a whole vast mythology relating to contemporary history. In this mythology, which is to be found in many different languages—in English, in French, in Italian, in Spanish, in Dutch, and in hundreds of different writers—certain symbols had a quite definite and common meaning. Thus, by all the peoples who hated the power of Spain, or who, even in Spain itself, were antagonistic to Castile, it was customary to designate the Castilians as either Moors or Jews.

Modern historians, such as H. Forneron,* consider that there is a real ethnological basis for this point of view—that the common people of Castile are, very largely, of Jewish or Moorish blood. It is not germane to our purpose to consider whether H. Forneron be right or wrong. The essential point is that the sixteenth century *believed* it; that they considered the Castilians to be of Moorish and Jewish blood, not Europeans, and regularly represented them as such.

* Philip II. of Spain.

It is difficult to find a single anti-Spanish manifesto or tract which does not taunt the Spaniards with the fact of their being really Moors. One of the most famous of these tracts is the work I have already referred to, the "Apology" or "Defence" of William the Silent, published in 1580. The "Apology" was formerly supposed to have been composed by Hubert Languet; it is now more generally ascribed to Duplessis-Mornay; but, whoever actually held the pen, it was spoken in the person of William the Silent and sent by him as his official defence to almost all the Courts of Europe. It certainly ranks as one of the most important State documents of the whole sixteenth century, and led directly to the famous Abjuration of 1582, in which the States General, meeting at the Hague, repudiated the power and authority of Spain.

In this "Apology," the proscribed rebel, William the Silent, openly and audaciously attacks Philip II. and Spain. He compares the Spaniards to Moors; he accuses Philip of the murder of his wife, Elizabeth of Valois, and declares that this murder was meant as a step towards the subjugation of Italy.

He repudiates the accusations brought by Philip against himself, and says: "Impute them to the rage and desperate madness of the enemies of God, of the enemies of all Chris-

tendom. . . . He (I say) upbraided me with my marriage who hath cruelly murdered his own wife, the daughter and sister of the Kings of France . . . yea, his lawful wife."

Philip accuses Orange of being a stranger in the United Provinces; on the contrary, Orange maintains, it is not he, it is Philip himself who is the stranger and the Spaniards who act like strangers and Mohammedans. "The Duke of Alva hath willingly bathed himself in our blood and in the blood of all Christians, carrying a Turkish heart within him. I will no more wonder at that which all the world believeth, to wit, that the greatest part of the Spaniards and specially those that count themselves noblemen are of the blood of the Moores and Jews, who also keep this virtue of their Ancestors, who solde for readie money downe tolde the life of our Saviour, which also maketh me to take patiently this injurie layde upon me."

It is not surprising that an example set by William the Silent should have been followed by all anti-Spanish Europe, and accordingly, as I have said, no accusations are more common and more widespread than these two: that the Spaniards are of the blood of the Moors, and that Philip II. murdered his own wife. They are the commonplaces of the anti-Spanish tracts, whether the writers are Catholics or Protestants, for the Catholics very naturally try to remove

the disgrace Spanish cruelties had cast on the Catholic religion by asserting that the Spaniards are really Mohammedans or Jews and not Christians at all.

Take, for instance, "The Anti-Spaniard," a tract published in 1590 by an anonymous French gentleman, who declares himself a Catholic, but wishes to prove that the Spanish King is the origin of all the troubles of France. I quote indifferently from the French or English versions:

"Shall the country of France become servile to the commandment of the Spaniard? Shall France be added to the title of this king . . . Of this demie-Moore, demie-Jew, yea demie-Saracen?"

In this tract it will be noted Philip II. himself (still reigning in 1590) must be the demi-Saracen.

The same tract proceeds to explain how Sicily, Naples, Milan, and Roussillon were all subtly dismembered from the Crown of France by "this Saracen Castilian or Castilian Saracen."

The French version states that, if Spain be allowed to make the Infanta Queen of France, she will rule them in the midst of a Council of old Moors and obey only her father. "Comment! quelle indignité, quelle honte à la France, que ce nouveau venu, ce nouveau Chrestien que

nous avons tiré de l'Alcoran et de la Synagogue, qui sans nous serait encores Sarrazin ou Juif, qu'il ayt seulement osé penser d'entreprendre de marcher devant nos Roys-Tres-Chrestiens."

Here, again, we have Spain as the new type of Christian, drawn from the Alcoran and the Synagogue, who, without the example of France, would be still Saracen or Jewish and also as a parvenu. It also declares that the Spaniards would, if they could, drive Henry of Navarre from his kingdom, and give him as a substitute a mere Mediterranean island—Sardinia or Majorca and Minorca.

Another similar tract is "The Flower de Luce," a manifesto by a Frenchman against Spain, supposed to be by P. Forget, and translated into English 1593.

It declares that France will gather strength to defend her rightful King: "In how short space shall we see all these Spanish forces cut in pieces? all these garrisons of Moores died in their own blood?"

This tract also accuses the Spaniards of bringing their own country to shipwreck and being unable to guide themselves, let alone others: "You try to persuade people to enter into your ship half-broken, when it is upon the point of shipwreck."

The whole thing is summed up: "These new

Christians—*i.e.*, the Spaniards—are nearly all at heart Jews and Saracens."

Motley* is struck by this almost inevitable comparison, and refers to it; he says of the Netherland burghers: "They were doing their best to strike down the universal monarchy of Spain, which they described as a blood-thirsty, insolent, absolute dominion of Saracenic-Moorish Christians."

"This Saracenic-Moorish empire kept Milan and Naples in abject slavery, and had seized Portugal."

Even the disaffected Spaniards employ the same comparison. One of the most important political tracts of the period, because we find its material so often quoted, is, "A Treatise Paræneticall (an Exhortation). By a Pilgrim-Spaniard beaten by time and persecuted by fortune." It was published both in French and English, specially addressed to Henry IV. of France, and the English translation bears the date of 1598. It contains all the accusations against Philip II. to be found in William the Silent's "Apology," and precisely the same view of the Spaniards.

The main substance is that France should take warning by the fate of Portugal, which has lost its national independence and is subjected to Spain, and that Philip II. desires France

* "Rise of the Dutch Republic."

for himself and his children, and would fob off Henry of Navarre with a mere island realm —Sardinia or Majorca and Minorca—and also, if Henry would willingly agree, give him the Duchy of Milan in addition.

The Pilgrim-Spaniard dwells on the universal hatred felt for the Castilians even in the other provinces of Spain: "As to the Castilians, they are descended of the Vandals, the Jews, and the Moores; and their language is in a manner all one with that of the Moores and their pronunciation all one or much alike. Thereof it commeth that the Castilians, being in the country of the Saracens, or of the Turks, they do soone and verie easily denie the Christian faith and they do turne altogether Turke and Infidell."

A long list of Philip's crimes is given, which includes the murder of his brother, Don John of Austria, and his wife, Isabel or Elizabeth. The author repeats again: "The Castilians are descended of the Moores and Jews (for these two peoples live mingled pell-mell together) and the pronunciation of their language is after the Moorish fashion; seeing that the Moores have inhabited their country so many years and yet at this present possess and occupie a great part of Castile."

The same comparison is employed by the Italians—for example, by Trajano Boccalini in

his "Touchstone of Politics" (1610). He generally personifies Spain as a lady of dark and swarthy complexion, attended by a retinue of Moors.

Under the circumstances, it is not surprising that Spain itself should be symbolized as a Moor, and I turn now to one of the works which I consider as rivalling in importance Buchanan's "Detection of Mary Stuart," and Pierre Mathieu's "The Glorious Life and Deplorable Death of Henry IV." for the light it throws upon Shakespeare.

The British Museum contains several copies of an exceedingly rare work, described as one of the rarest books in Europe, and entitled "Filippiche. Contra Gli Spagnuoli."* It consists of several political tracts bound together, dated as a whole, though doubtfully, 1615, though individual dates for the tracts are not given and it is anonymous; two, at any rate, of the tracts are ascribed to Alessandro Tassoni, on the authority, apparently, of Tiraboschi, and they appear under Tassoni's name in the catalogue; but of none is the ownership avowed. The book must have been dangerous even to possess in any part of the Continent where Spanish power extended, for it is an impassioned plea

* So called because directed against Philip III. of Spain. Five tracts are included in one copy, 176 d4, and seven in another, G 6369 (B.M. Catalogue).

to the princes of Italy to unite in giving aid to the Venetian Republic and so saving the last free State of Italy from the power of Spain. The Spaniards would certainly have ordained the death of the author had they known his identity, for the same reason as they attempted the assassination of Pietro Sarpi.

The writer summons the nobles and princes of Italy to struggle against their contemptible fate of being subject to strangers who, made barbarians by African and Moorish customs, hold courtesy in disdain.

"In à che tempo sopportaremo noi, ò Principi, ò Cavalieri Italiani, di esser non diro dominari, ma calpestati dall'alterigia, dal fasto di' popoli stranieri, che imbarbariti da costumi Africani et Moreschi, hanno la cortesia per viltà?"

The writer proceeds to lament the tragic fate of Italy. The Italians, alone among all men and among all animals, prefer to unite themselves to strangers and to abandon their fatherland. It is the fatal infelicity of Italy that she should, against all laws human and divine, abandon her own people and her country and unite herself to armed strangers in order to follow their fortunes.

"*Noi soli Italiani diversi da tutti gli altri huomini, da tutti gli altri animali, abbandoniamo il vicino, abbandoniamo la Patria, per*

unirci' con gli stranieri nemici nostri? Fatale infelicità d'Italia, habbiamo perduto il viver politico et *senza risguardo di legge humana, ò divina, habbiamo in costume di abbandonar i nostri et adherirci all'arme straniere, per seguitar la fortune del più potente.*"*

The writer gives a general survey of the political condition of Italy; the Spaniards control Sicily and Naples in the south and Milan in the north; Genoa is almost wholly submissive to them. Only Venice remains, the last great State which is free, and therefore the future of all Italy depends on her and her only, and, if Venice perishes, all will be lost: "*Non si resta, si non la sola republica di Venetia,* la quale col Turco da un lato, e con li Spagnuoli dall'altro, come fra due lime, si rimarrà finalmente consummata, ò distrutta?"

He beseeches the Italian princes to join together against Spain, and drive out these Moors ("Moreschi") and implores Savoy to lead them.

In Tracts II. and III. the author speaks of the desert condition of Spain; he declares that the greater part of this country is sterile and desert, rocky and barren, much of it is sand which produces hardly anything. It consists, he says ironically, of 'beautiful' plains where you will only find one human habitation in a day's journey, of 'beautiful' mountains which are all

* Tract I.

naked rock, of 'beautiful' hills where there is not a single blade of grass nor drop of water.*

Its inhabitants are 'wandering cavaliers,' who live on bread baked in the sun, onions, and radishes. So desert is Spain that it takes a whole kingdom to raise one company of infantry. "*I regni suoi parte sono sterili e diserti, come* quelli d'Aragona, e di Galicia: *parte horridi, e alpestri*—parte montuosi e sassosi come Catalogna e Navarra."

"*Bellissime compagne d'arena rossa, che non producono altro che rosmarino, e spico selvatico. Bellissime pianure, dove non si trova più d'una habitatione per giornata: Bellissime montagne di nudi e spezzati sassi. Bellissimi colli, dove non vì è filo d'herba, nè stilla d'acqua . . . Legioni de Cavalieri erranti* che avezze à pascerci di panne cotto al Sole, e di cipolle, e radici."

"*Queste sono le tremende forze di Spagna dove bisogna un Regno à far una compagnia de soldate à piedi.*"

It is because the Spaniard is a Moor by race, because he inhabits such a naturally desert land, that he has never fully acquired the arts of civilization, that he remains untamed, furious, and capable of cruel insults.

* To be found in the majority of the anti-Spanish tracts; they nearly all refer to Spain as a "desert country," "baked by the sun," "barren of inhabitants," etc.

All the world wonders at the way in which Venice has been outraged and insulted and at the patience with which she has borne her wrongs; but all the world grieves for the beloved Republic and would feel that she might justly bear resentment: 'questa mia diletta Republica in caso ch'ella si volesse in cosi giusta occasione risentire.'

But Venice shows herself the very model of Christian piety and patience, concealing the innumerable wrongs done to her; she feels herself, however, lost amid inexplicable cruelties and insults and treacheries. What can she do? What shield or what defence remains to her?

She is helpless before the cruel and enraged wolves. Spain accuses her of crimes, and she has no defence though she is most pure in heart and most virtuous.

If the Italian princes do not rescue Venice, Italy herself will be helpless in the bosom of the ambitious and warlike barbarian monarchy.

"*Ma ella* (*i.e.*, Venice) *si ritrova colma di Christiana pietà . . . dissimulando gl'innumerabili danni fattili* . . . credendo certissimo, che non nascessero giamai tante astutie et cosi perfide sceleratezze, e che non uscissero giamai tanti maleficii.

"*. . . Che poteva che doveva più ella fare? che schermo, che diffesa le restava?* . . . se non . . . dimostrare quanto ami se stessi,

quanto le sia a cuore il suo stato . . . quanto poco temi *la ferocità, el le estutie di questi non tanto superbi, quanto crudeli e arrabbiati lupi.*"

If they do not rescue Venice they will all fall into the bosom of the barbarian: "*Tutti voi ancora nel vastissimo seno di una ambitiosamente* già tanti lustri desiderata e machinata *Monarchia di barbari.*"*

Tract IV. draws a long and careful distinction between the natures of Venice and Spain, which are so widely different that they cannot understand each other. The Spaniards have but newly arrived at power; they are essentially parvenus; they yield themselves to the sway of their passions; they are careless of how they wreak their desires upon others; they are rebellious not only against civil and human laws but even against natural and divine laws; from all restraints of this kind they rebel; they do, however, desire fame and glory.

Venice, on the other hand, believes that true liberty resides in obedience to law, and that this is the true guide for human actions and the true foundation for virtue. "*Perche la libertà di Spagna si come è nuova rispetto al tempo della sua potenza e dominio, ilqual apena arriva al primo secolo, cosi è nuova la sua natura, essendo fatta potestà assoluta di operar secondo il suo proprio appassionato appetito*, e fastosa

* Tract III.

ambizione tutto quello non solo, che intende e conosce buono e utile à fe, ma ancora quello che non intende, e non conosce, e *che è dannoso à gli altri, independente non solo da lege civile, e humana, ma da naturale e divina*, ora si come in una parte è veramente franco di far quello, che vuole . . . essendo in *questa alquanto limitata e ristretta e soggetto alla fortuna, al Cielo, all fama alla gloria.*"

In other words, the Spaniard has but newly won his way to power and dominion; this power of his is a new thing; he has not learnt the arts of civilization, to submit himself to any laws, human or divine; he will not allow any considerations whatever to interfere with his passions, but he does acknowledge the sway of destiny and the influence of fame and glory.

"Ma la libertà di Venezia . . . non è *independente da lege civile, e da potestà temporale, nella qual soggezione consiste la vera e perfetta libertà*, essendo questa la dritta regola dell' humane azioni, e 'l fondamento della virtù."

These two kinds of liberty are wholly diverse in nature, their ends and aims are separate, and therefore they cannot be united together; the one gives way to appetite till the human being becomes a fox or a lion, the other submits to reason and the rule of law and aims at justice and honour. They cannot possibly understand each other, and Venice, therefore, incites the

hatred and abominable suspicion of these barbarians. Spain thus continually plots against the 'maiden Queen of the Sea.'

"Queste due libertà, cosi di nome congionte, come di natura diverse, e di fini separate, e lontane, non si possono tolerar insieme, essendo l'una dall'appetito assoluto scorta, seguendo i magici consili di colore che la tramutano meza in Volpe, e meza in Leone, l'altra dalla ragion civile regolata, non havendo altro scopo, che la giustizia e l'onestá, onde la liberta Spagnuola . . . ha tentato atterra la Veneta . . . con disprezzo delle legi divine e humane con esempio fin a barbari odioso e abominevole."

Spain plots against and will destroy "La Vergine Regina del mare."

Spain desires to overthrow Venice from her position of chaste pride, and makes malignant inventions against her, desiring to destroy her reputation in the eyes of the world. All these accusations are untrue; Venice has not sullied herself by tolerating the Adriatic pirates; on the contrary, the glorious fame of Venice is known throughout the world. The beautiful body of Venice is full of the ancient modesty, of prudence, of peace, and of concord; she is all innocence and pure religion; she is beloved enthusiastically by all men to whom honour and goodness appeal, and her loss would be a loss for the whole world.

"Non è maraviglia, che la nuova e licentiosa libertà Spagnuola sia affatto contraria all'antica e innata Libertà Veneta, onde con forze dell' ingegno e del corpo, con arteficii, insidie e ingiurie procuri abatterla e isradicarla della sua Virginal Sede, componendo . . . *maligne invenzioni contra la sua libera, anzi miracolosa origine, per levarle il fondamento della riputazione appresso li Prencipi, e i popoli, et solevarle contra lei, à favor suo.*"

The glorious fame of the Republic is known throughout the world; she is "*questo antico esemplare di modestia, e prudenza civile, di pace, di concordia, di innocenza e pura religione di giustizia, e d'amore universale, dalla fama in tutte le età e le parti della terra.*"*

The writer dwells, it will be observed, on the peacefulness of her character, her love of concord, her innocence, her pure religion, her 'universal love,' and her good fame.

The writer continually dilates on the vast range of Spanish ambitions; they have passed the confines of the known world, they have penetrated beyond the bounds of nature; like a new Alexander, Spain wishes to reign over infinite numbers of people and worlds.

"*Ma la Spagnuola ambizione passati i confini delle conosciute terre, e mari e penetrata oltra li termini della natura, fatti incomparabili*

* Tract V.

acquisti, nuovo Alessandro vuol signoreggiar l'infiniti popoli, e mondi."

In Tracts V. and VII. the writer speaks of the terrible dangers that the occupation of Venice by Spain will bring upon both of them: the 'African licence' of Spain will certainly put an end to the life of Venice: "*Essendo della Republica il fine non l'occupazione.*"

Venice has always endeavoured to maintain peace with all nations and has always kept faith; she has fled like the plague hypocrisy, ambition, and avarice, and has preferred always purity and innocence.

"Perciò con tutte le nazioni, sempre ha procurata e mantenuta buona e real pace, à tutte ha osservata la fede . . . *fugendo come la peste l'ipocrisia, anteponendo la purità e l'innocenza.*"

It was the Catholic doctrine of Spain and her wars against the infidels which attracted Venice; but with incredible lies Spain has maligned Venice.

The writer, however, warns Spain that it is weakened by all its labours and toils, by its many wars, by its endless journeys over land and sea; its people are few and scattered over two continents; it has lost its strength in battle and in long voyages amongst barbarians. It cannot endure many more trials.

"Conosci te stessa, ô Spagna, che se ben sei grande e quasi incomparabile gigantessa di

ampiezza . . . *tuttavia tu hai rare le abitazioni e le terre, picioli popoli e puochi parte sparsi in ogni luogo di questo gran continente settentrionale, parte trapassati all'altro grandissimo australe, parte spenti nelle diuturne guerre della Germania.*

"*. . . parte ingiottiti dal mare e da pesci nelle longhe navigazioni, parte divorati de barbari, parte consumati ne faticose loro viaggi, parte morti nelle battaglie presenti d'Italia.*"*

Fortune has hitherto favoured Spain because of its courage and daring, and has given it control of so many lands and seas; its fortune has been swift and its success wonderful; 'il tuo veloce ascendente, la amiranda felicitá;' none the less, all this will fall and be destroyed if Spain undertakes too many burdens.

Spanish ascendancy in Italy will mean the death of Italy, but it will also mean the death of Spain; the murder of Italy will be the suicide of Spain.

Religion is the true bond between Venice and Spain; but it is contrary to the Christian faith to attempt to destroy Venice and break the holy bond. Nothing will be left of either of them but darkness and silence, corruption and death.

(Of Spain.) "E' tanta la ceccitá de tuoi gouvernatori, che quanto piu tu ti retrovi

* Tract VII.

debile, estenuata di genti e di denari, tanto maggior peso di stati, di popoli e di guerre procuran parti sopra le spalle, come se fossi più robuto di Atlante, il qual del peso di un solo mondo se ne sta chino e affanato."

Spain, if it falls, will fall like Lucifer: "Quomodo cecidisti de cælo Lucifer."

The wheel will come full circle and fortune abandon Spain: 'Accioche dalla tua grazia abbandonato non rivolga il giro ò la ruota."

Both will perish: "Come dalla privasion della luce le tenebre, la servitu, la pestilenza, la desolazione che resultan da tali miserie, come dalle tenebre l'ozio, la corrozione, la morte."*

Now, it is impossible, I think, to compare the "Philippics" with Othello without being struck by the general likeness between the two.

We have Venice personified as an individual and Spain personified as an individual and a religious bond between them.

We have Spain personified as a Moor, a Moorish adventurer who has won renown and fortune with the sword and who has swiftly risen to eminence; we have him personified as the inhabitant of a rocky and desert land, sandy and barren, where many times there is hardly a blade of grass or a drop of water to

* Tract VII.

be found on a day's journey, and where the 'wandering warriors' live on bread cooked in the sun; we have, as the natural result of such a desert and barren country, parched by the sun, and of a life of continual warfare, a temper unrestrained and violent, easily turning to savagery, and this in spite of the acknowledged love of fame and glory which are the master impulses of life. We have the many perils endured, the wanderings in all lands, known and unknown, the burden of a terrific responsibility, the almost infinite, patient labours.

We have this African wooing the lady of Venice to his bosom and we have the certainty that, if he succeeds, it will mean the death of both, her murder and his suicide.

Note how this conception in all its main outlines corresponds to Shakespeare's magnificent Othello: a Moor, but an heroic Moor, fully experienced in war, for the Spanish veterans were acknowledged as the finest infantry in Europe, possessed of utter calmness in the face of danger. Othello, also, has known the same perils and dangers in distant lands:

> Wherein I spake of most disastrous chances,
> Of moving accidents by flood and field,
> Of hair-breadth 'scapes i' the imminent deadly breach,
> Of being taken by the insolent foe,
> And sold to slavery, of my redemption thence
> And portance in my travels history;
> Wherein of antres vast and deserts idle,

> Rough quarries, rocks and hills whose heads touch heaven
> . . . And of the Cannibals that each other eat,
> The Anthropophagi, and men whose heads
> Do grow beneath their shoulders.
> (I. iii.).

It is notable that two of the most important events in Othello's life, one of which he recounts in this speech and the other in his last speech, are that he was once in slavery 'taken by the insolent foe,' but redeemed, and that he smote to death a Turk who traduced Venice (V. ii.):

> in Aleppo once
> Where a malignant and a turban'd Turk
> Beat a Venetian and traduc'd the state,
> I took by the throat the circumcised dog
> And smote him, thus.

Now these do correspond to two of the main events in the history of Spain; a considerable part of Spain was subjected to Moorish conquest and Moorish dominion; it did, when it had found its freedom, embark on its great career of expansion in the New World, as Othello says he embarked on his travels, and, in the second place, the great service Spain performed for Venice was undoubtedly when it smote the Turk in the Battle of Lepanto. The Venetian smitten by the Turks was the Venetian admiral whose skin was flayed from his body and stuffed with straw as an insult to Venice.

The character of Venice corresponds with equal clearness and closeness to that of Shakespeare's Desdemona. The writer laments the fatal gift of Italy, that her imagination is so stirred by strangers, that she will (unlike anyone else in the world) leave her fatherland and her own people to ally herself with warlike strangers. This is precisely the incredulous lament of Brabantio over Desdemona (I. ii.):

> Whether a maid so tender, fair and happy,
> So opposite to marriage that she shunn'd
> The wealthy curled darlings of our nation,
> Would ever have, to incur a general mock,
> Run from her guardage to the sooty bosom
> Of such a thing as thou.

Note also that all the time Cyprus is the immediate problem occupying Othello, for the Duke has sent for him to go to Cyprus at exactly and precisely the moment he is engaged in enticing away Desdemona (I. ii.).

Cassio says:

> The duke does greet you, general,
> And he requires your haste-post-haste appearance,
> Even on the instant.

Othello inquires:

> What is the matter, think you?

and Cassio replies:

> Something from Cyprus, as I may divine:
> It is a business of some heat: the galleys
> Have sent a dozen sequent messengers

This very night at one another's heels;
. . . you have been hotly call'd for;
. . . The senate hath sent about three several quests
To search you out.

It is this imperative need on the part of the Senate which makes Desdemona's fate a certainty, for the Senate has, under the circumstances, no choice; it is compelled to ratify Othello's marriage.

All this correspond's exactly with the historical circumstances; it was just because the Turks had taken possession of Cyprus that the Treaty of Alliance between Venice and Spain became imperative. Moreover, we have the nuptial of Othello and Desdemona celebrated at Cyprus.

In Act I. sc. iii. we see the Duke and Senators assembled and perceive their wild excitement over Cyprus:

Duke. There is no composition in these news
That gives them credit.
1st Sen. Indeed, they are disproportion'd;
My letters say a hundred and seven galleys.
Duke. And mine, a hundred and forty.
2nd Sen. And mine, two hundred. . . .

* * * * *

Tis oft with difference,—yet do they all confirm
A Turkish fleet, and bearing up to Cyprus.

It is immediately after that Othello and Desdemona appear before the Senate, and, Brabantio's plea being rejected, their marriage

is ratified by the Senate and Desdemona allowed to accompany Othello to Cyprus.

Of course, the Treaty of Alliance between Venice and Spain *had* to come before the Venetian Senate, it was *not* valid until they approved of it, and the reason they were forced to approve of it was precisely because of the difficulty in which they were involved over Cyprus.

I fail to see how Shakespeare could have shown more significantly that he has the same *meaning* as Tassoni.

Certainly the character of Venice, as given by Tassoni, corresponds exactly to that of Desdemona.

Venice, so the authors of the "Filippiche" explain, is of a particularly modest, tranquil, and quiet disposition, and most chaste and pure, yet loving to all men. This is the character of Shakespeare's "Desdemona."

Brabantio describes her as 'opposite to marriage' (I. ii.), and speaks of her as (I. iii.):

> A maiden never bold;
> A spirit so still and quiet that her motion
> Blush'd at itself.

The "Filippiche" describe the Moorish adventurer, the African barbarian, as heaping all kinds of insults and injuries upon the Venetian lady, and represent her as bearing

them with quiet patience and even dissimulating her injuries. This, again, is true of Desdemona. She does bear the insults of Othello with consummate patience and does, so far as she can, dissimulate them.

Throughout the "Filippiche" we have great stress laid on the diversity of nature between the two, that the passionate and jealous Moor cannot understand the generosity and purity of the Venetian lady; seeing that she welcomes all men with gladness, he suspects her of unchastity; he attacks and sullies her fair fame.

All this is exactly paralleled in Shakespeare's "Othello"; the natures of Othello and Desdemona are hopelessly diverse; they cannot understand each other; Brabantio dwells on the hopeless contrast between them; how is it possible that his daughter can 'fall in love with what she fear'd to look on' (I. iii.).

Iago dwells on the same thing; he calls it a match between 'an erring barbarian and a super-subtle Venetian' (I. iii.), and is convinced that it cannot last long.

Even Iago, however, admits Desdemona's generosity and her freedom from suspicion:

> she's framed as fruitful
> As the free elements. (II. iii.).

Again, even to Othello himself, Iago points out the disproportion between them and Desde-

mona's strangeness in rejecting her own kind (III. iii.):

> Not to affect many proposed matches
> Of her own clime, complexion and degree.

The authors of the "Filippiche" dwell on the 'African barbarian's' outrageous violence when once he is roused, his thirst for blood and murderous anger, and we certainly see this in Othello, who, when enraged, becomes a wild beast, moaning for "Blood, blood, blood" (III. iii.), and decides at once on the deaths of Desdemona and Cassio.

The "Filippiche" concludes with the deaths of both the Moorish adventurer and the lady of Venice, so "Othello" concludes with the deaths of both Othello and Desdemona.

Everyone remembers the magnificence of Othello's farewell to life, of how he speaks as if he were soldier and sailor in one (V. ii.):

> I have a weapon;
> A better never did itself sustain
> Upon a soldier's thigh; I have seen the day
> That, with this little arm and this good sword,
> I have made my way through more impediments
> Than twenty times your stop: but, O vain boast!
> Who can control his fate?
>
> * * * * *
>
> Here is my journey's end, here is my butt,
> And very sea-mark of my utmost sail.

Now, this again is exactly like Tassoni's description of his Moorish barbarian, equally

great both by land and sea, carving out his fortune with his sword, but whose fortune will turn against him at last, for he cannot possess Italy without destroying her, nor murder her without sharing her fate.

If these parallels stood alone they would be sufficiently remarkable, but they do not stand alone; as I shall proceed to show, the historical parallels in the remainder of the play are equally significant.

Let me, however, pause for a moment in order to consider the possible connections between "Othello," its supposed source in Cinthio's novel, and Tassoni's "Filippiche."

We observe in the first place that the *plot* of Shakespeare's play conforms more closely to Cinthio's novel than it does to the "Filippiche"; there are, however, several important differences; the ensign who takes the part of Iago in Cinthio's novel is himself a primary agent in the murder of Desdemona; the Moor does not commit suicide or die of grief, he is tortured, imprisoned, and sent into exile and ultimately killed by his wife's relatives. The Desdemona of the novel is not repudiated by her father, the father does not appeal to the Venetian Senate, and thus the question of the marriage does not come before the Venetian Senate at all; also the ensign's motive for

jealousy against Othello is that he desires Desdemona for himself; the murder is committed by the two men—the ensign and the Moor—beating Desdemona to death with a sandbag.

These differences in plot are important, but they do not do away with the general resemblance.

On the other hand, the differences in *character* and *psychology* between Cinthio's novel and "Othello" are of the profoundest possible kind, and it is precisely in *character* and *psychology* that the resemblance to the "Filippiche" is so close. There is nothing whatever splendid about Cinthio's Moor; we are not told of his desert country, or of his magnificent achievements in war, or of his greatness and courage as a soldier, or of his wonderful voyagings and journeys, or of his perils, or of the essential tragedy in the marriage because of the diversity between his nature and the nature of Desdemona. Similarly, we have no analysis of the wonderful character of Desdemona as so particularly tranquil and quiet and modest, as so loving to all men and yet so chaste and pure; we are not told that the Moor casts public slanders on her chastity and that she dissembles her injuries with patience; we are not told that her one fault is the fatal imagination which leads her to desert her own kith and kin and unite herself to armed strangers.

My belief is that Cinthio's novel is itself a portion of that European mythology which is so frequent in the tracts and which I have been describing; it is noticeable that not one of the characters has a name except Desdemona (spelt Disdemona), and her name is quite obviously artificial and invented; it means the 'ill-fated.' Cinthio's novel seems to me to bear all the marks of a 'roman à clef' without the key; but the Moor, and the relation of Venice, Spain, and Cyprus were European commonplaces.*

Shakespeare seems to have adapted the story with the name of the heroine from Cinthio, but he made its relation to history far plainer, and, in particular, recreated the characters, giving them precisely the greatness which Cinthio could not give and showing the essential psychology of the situation as Cinthio could not show it.

The "Filippiche" I think is based on Shakepeare's "Othello." Tassoni might very well have got his conception of the characters from "Othello," but he certainly could not have got it from Cinthio's novel, because their peculiar greatness and the ineffable tragedy of the conception are neither of them to be found there.

No translation of Cinthio's novel is to be

* Cinthio died in 1573, two years after the Battle of Lepanto. He was a native of Ferrara, on the edge of Venetian territory but in the Papal States. He could not possibly have published *openly* any attack on Spain.

found in English before 1795, and, whatever source Shakespeare used, it must, so far as we know, have been in Italian. At any rate, it is as difficult to account for Shakespeare's knowledge of Cinthio as for Tassoni's knowledge of Othello.

"Othello" dates, in all probability, from 1604 or 1605; but was not published, so far as we know, till the quarto of 1622. The "Filippiche" were published in collected form *circa* 1615.*

The extreme probability is that "Othello," in some form or another, was known to Tassoni; it may have been performed in English, or in an Italian version, or circulated in some actor's copy. Everyone who is even superficially acquainted with the age of Shakespeare knows that many works were circulated in MS., and even exercised a profound influence upon literature before they appeared at all in print. Donne's poems influenced English literature for thirty years before they were published; and, as Professor Bensly points out to me, some poems that were quite well known in their own day disappeared without any publication at all.†

* The British Museum copies cannot be dated with any certainty; internal evidence proves the date between 1600 and 1620.

† Sir Henry Wotton, a man greatly interested in contemporary poetry, was made in 1604 British lieger in Venice, and might easily have introduced the play to pro-Venetian Italian patriots.

The one thing, however, that I feel absolutely sure of is that Shakespeare's "Othello" and Tassoni's "Filippiche" are parts of a European mythology quite common at the time. Other useful analogues are to be found in Boccalini's "New-Found Politik" (1613); he also personifies Spain as a man, Venice as a woman, and represents Spain as acutely jealous; in his case, however, the Duke of Lorraine is the 'gallant' of whom Spain is jealous. "And fully to make up the Spaniard's jealousy the famous Venetian Commonwealth drew into her pay a Prince of that house with such affection that if that great Lady had not made a vow of perpetual chastity . . . it was verily believed that she would have taken him to husband."*

Here we have once again the conception of Venice as a 'chaste woman,' and Spain as regarding her with acute jealousy. Boccalini also (though not in the same paragraph) identifies Spaniards as Moors; he depicts Almanzor King of the Moors, meeting Naples chained with a Moorish chain, and tells him it is the very same chain with which the Moors had once enslaved Castile. The Spaniards were once themselves (like Shakespeare's "Othello") captive to the barbarians, but they have in-

* See also "Itália à Venezia" (B.M. 176 d4), where Italy entreats Venice, represented as a woman, to defend herself against the Moor (*i.e.*, Spain) and not to allow Spain to separate her from her true lover—Savoy.

flicted the very same Moorish captivity upon Europe.

I turn now to the personal tragedy, which also I believe to be shadowed in Shakespeare's play. The accusation against Philip II. of Spain that he murdered his French wife—Elizabeth of Valois—was very generally believed by all contemporary Europe in so far as contemporary Europe was anti-Spanish. We find it in Holland, in William the Silent's famous "Apology"; we find it among the French Catholics and French Protestants alike; it occurs in "L'Anti-Espagnol," in the "Flower-de-Luce," and it is found in the most important historians; De Thou refers to it, and so does Agrippa D'Aubigné in his "Histoire Universelle" and in "Les Tragiques"; Brantôme takes it for granted.*

It is also found in the anti-Castilian Spaniards such as the "Pilgrim-Spaniard." William the Silent, in the passage I have already quoted, fixed the stigma upon Philip before the eyes of all Europe: "He, I say, upbraided me with my marriage who (to the end he might obtain such a marriage), hath cruelly murdered his own wife, the daughter and sister of the Kings of France—yea his lawful wife" (1580).

Brantôme and many others record that Eliza-

* C. Bratli declares that the belief was practically universal in the contemporary French historians.

beth of Valois was one of the most beautiful women of her day, and that the King loved her with a mad passion that was almost insane in its jealousy. The Spanish nobles hardly dared to raise their eyes to her face for fear of inciting the anger of the King.

She was exceedingly merciful, and often solicited mercy for people condemned, even to the extent of exciting the King's anger. The fullest account of her death is, apparently, due to Antonio Perez, who was the chief contemporary source for all the scandals of Philip's reign.

The modern French biographers, H. Forneron* and A. T. du Prat,† who have had access to the Perez papers in Paris, give the story in outline as follows: Du Prat declares that Antonio Perez was filled with an impassioned hatred for Philip II.; he knew all his secrets of State, and secrets of the alcoves—"les secrets d'Etat et les secrets d'alcôve"—and denounced and betrayed him.

Du Prat shows that Philip was intensely devoted to Elizabeth and passionately enamoured of her; scores of witnesses speak of the intensity of his devotion, and describe her as the one great love of his life; the Queen, on her part, though at the first sight of him she

* "Histoire de Philippe II."
† "Elizabeth de Valois."

had felt terrors and presentiments, soon became deeply attached to him. Philip was and would have remained exceedingly tender towards her if only others had not made mischief between them and excited his jealousy. "L'humeur sombre du roi aurait pu être completement adoucie par cette influence, si des passions, des intêrets et surtout l'action mauvaise de coupables n'avaient point exercé sur lui leur empire. L'inquietude et le regret, ces fruits de l'amour, ces épines du bonheur, avaient accès dans son âme."

The story of the murder, as told by Antonio Perez, runs as follows: A certain Marquis del Pozzo, who made love to one of the Queen's ladies, was permitted by her to have ingress to the royal apartments and to visit them by night; the King was informed, and a watch was set and the Marquis seen leaving; as ill-fortune decreed, the Queen happened to drop her handkerchief and the same gentleman picked it up.

This caused the King's suspicion to become concentrated on the person of the Queen; he gave directions for a murderous midnight attack to be made on the gentleman and ordered one of the Queen's attendants to give her poison. The Queen, however, resisted, so the King gave the Queen the poison with his own hands as she lay in her bed, and soon

after she died. "Un marquis del Pozzo, faisant l'amour à une des filles de la reine, vint si avant qu'il eut le crédit d'entrer de nuict quelquefois dans le quartier de la reine, pour aller voir sa mâitresse; ce qu'estant découvert, le roy moyenna que certains gentils-hommes, ses confidens . . . allassent dormir sous une halle qui correspondoit aux fenêtres du costé de la reine, où s'étant aperçu du galant . . . et l'ayant suivi et vérifié qu'il étoit celui dont on se doutait, le malheur voulut qu'en une course de bague la reine, étant à sa fenêtre, laissât cheoir par mégarde un mouchoir, qui fut recueilli par le même. . . .

"Tout cela ensemble augmenta le soupçon qu'on avoit sur la personne de la reine, et fit qu'on épiât pour la deuxième fois quand il en sortiroit de nuict, qu'on de daguât criant toujours: Assi muge el traydor."

The King next deals with the Queen; he tried to get one of his servants to poison her, but was unsuccessful; then he undertook the task himself; he entered, says du Prat, the bedroom where she was in bed and persuaded the Queen to take the poison he held in his hands although the Queen resisted for a time: "Laquelle résista longtems et par raison et par refus tout à fait."

This is the substance of the tale as told by Antonio Perez, and Shakespeare, as I have

already explained, would in all human probability have met and known Perez personally;* at any rate, all the narratives of Perez were well known to the whole Essex group, because the man himself stayed in England as the protégé of Essex, and they employed him for the most important political purposes.

Du Prat declares that he—Perez—did much to excite and help the United Provinces in their revolt against Spain; he was the soul of the treaties which bound France and England together in their alliance against this redoubtable power.

"Il animait les Provinces-Unies à la révolte contre l'Espagne; il était l'âme des traités qui allaient lier la France et l'Angleterre contre cette dangereuse et redoubtable puissance."

It was certainly he, du Prat considers, who was mainly responsible for the tale of Elizabeth's assassination, and who laid the whole blame upon the King's jealousy.

H. Forneron also tells the same story with the same outline—namely, that Philip went himself into the Queen's bedroom and gave her the poison in her bed. He shows that previously the Queen had suffered from the greatest sad-

* Perez came to England for a brief time in the very year "Othello" was written (see Venetian State Papers, March 4th, 1604).

ness, had experienced swooning fits, and a profound grief which caused her to weep though she did not know why: "Évanouissements lesquels lui viennent avec une tristesse qui la contrait de pleurer sans savoir pourquoi."

Now, here again it is impossible not to see the likeness between this story and the story of Othello. We have Philip II. of Spain who was abused by three-quarters of Europe as a Moor; we have him married to a young and beautiful wife, much younger than himself, as Othello describes Desdemona to be (III. iii.):

> For I am declined
> Into the vale of years.

We have Philip's mad passion for his wife, who was described by all his contemporaries as the greatest love of his life; we have his intense jealousy; we have suspicion excited against the innocent wife by the imprudence of one of her own ladies who unintentionally compromises her; we have the loss of the Queen's handkerchief, which, accidentally let fall, is seen in the hands of the gallant, and taken as proof positive by the jealous husband; we have the unhappy and mournful behaviour of the Queen, tears and forebodings and apparent foreknowledge of her fate; we have the husband's first ordering a servant to poison her as Othello

orders Iago to poison Desdemona, and then, on the command being evaded, changing his mind and killing her in the bed which she had polluted, as a sort of symbolic act, in spite of her own pitiful protests against her fate.

We have also a very similar type of character, for all contemporary authorities speak of Elizabeth's obedience to Philip, her sweet submission, and of her intense compassion, which made her plead again and again for the victims of his severity, often with such reiterated pleas that she excited his anger.*

Can anyone fail to see the parallel? The husband who murders the innocent wife whom he idolizes, and murders her out of jealousy, the curiously distinctive incident of the dropped handkerchief which is the centre of the whole tragedy, and the curiously distinctive details that the husband first ordered her to be poisoned and then murdered her in her bed with his own hands. Add that he was universally taunted as a Moor and famous throughout Europe for his intense jealousy, and it is difficult to see how anything could be plainer.

When we refer to Cinthio's novel we see that

* Brantôme says she was the greatest treasure that Philip possessed, more valuable than his sceptre and his crown, and that two great nations—France and Spain—suffered during a whole generation from her death.

Shakespeare has altered the original story in a way that makes it more closely resemble the history. Thus, in Cinthio's novel the handkerchief is *stolen by a child*, an incident which does not appear in the narrative of Perez or in Shakespeare's play. In Cinthio's novel, again, the husband does not commit the murder alone, the villain helps him, and between them they beat Desdemona to death with a sandbag. Shakespeare, as in the narrative of Perez, makes the husband first *suggest* the murder to someone else and then carry it out himself.

It does not seem to me in the least difficult to see what really happened. This reputed tragedy of Philip's Court was a commonplace all over Europe; William the Silent's "Apology" had made the accusation universally known, and had, as I have already pointed out, closely connected it with the fate of Italy and Venice. Very naturally European tradition seized on the tale and on the parallel; the supposed fate of Philip's innocent and noble wife became a commonly accepted symbol for the fate of Venice if she fell into the hands of Spain. We have, also popularized by William the Silent, the conception of Spain as a Moor. Tassoni certainly uses the tale in this sense, and Boccalini offers very close parallels, and so do many anonymous writers.

I cannot see any reason whatever why Shakespeare should not use the tale with the same meaning as his Italian contemporaries and in the same sense as that suggested by William the Silent. We can see the whole development of the idea from the "Apology" down to Tassoni's "Filippiche"; Shakespeare's "Othello" is simply one stage in the development later than the "Apology" and Cinthio's novel,* and earlier than Tassoni's "Filippiche." There are probably a good many Italian analogues which I have not yet found; they are bound to exist, if at all, in rare copies, for the Spaniards destroyed all anti-Spanish literature on which they could lay their hands.

I can see nothing particularly far-fetched in this sixteenth-century symbolism. Even modern historians, who cannot possibly be aware of the fact that they are illustrating Shakespeare, use precisely the same symbolism.

Neither H. Forneron nor A. T. du Prat believe that Philip really did murder his wife; they rely on the evidence of the French ambassador who was present at her death and who certainly makes it appear as a natural event; but this evidence has only *recently* become available, it was not available in the sixteenth cen-

* The resemblances in Cinthio's novel may be purely accidental, but this is unlikely.

tury, and H. Forneron and A. T. du Prat agree that Philip's contemporaries very generally believed the tale of the murder.

H. Forneron also believes that Philip was indirectly responsible for his wife's death by depriving her of air; the seclusion he enforced upon her, the deprivation of air particularly, was so great that he practically destroyed her. He quotes pitiful letters from Elizabeth's mother (Catherine de Médici) pleading that her daughter may be allowed out occasionally and that she may be permitted to have some air, for the want of which she languishes and is dying. H. Forneron thinks this absolutely typical of Philip's whole system, which was all jealousy and suspicion; he stifled his wife, he stifled the Princess of Eboli, he stifled freedom of thought, he stifled political liberty, he stifled every country under his rule, he stifled Naples, he stifled Milan, he stifled all Italy, he stifled even Spain itself. H. Forneron uses again and again the very word '*étouffer.*'

He is simply using what I believe to be the almost universal symbolism of the sixteenth century, not because he is copying them, but because it is exactly the kind of symbolism which the history of Spanish tyranny does inevitably suggest—the suffocation of all freedom, of all liberty, of individuals, of whole countries.

I turn now to the connection of this story with the Princess of Eboli, because I believe this also has a bearing upon the plot of "Othello."

The Princess of Eboli was, according to the general belief of the sixteenth century, the real cause for the furious hatred existing between Antonio Perez and Philip II. She was certainly the mistress of Antonio Perez; she was very generally believed to have been the mistress of Philip also, and the quarrel between the two men was supposed to have originated in jealousy.

The Princess was placed by Philip in close relationship to Elizabeth of Valois, not precisely as her lady-in-waiting, but to watch over her and to spy upon her. "Elle ne fut point encore attaché à sa personne, mais elle en fut approchée. Si toute influence et toute autorité ne lui appartinient pas dès lors dans la maison d'Elizabeth, on lui accorda la faveur de l'intimité et les moyens de l'espionnage."

H. Forneron adds that Eboli was "la maîtresse non pas avouée mais réelle de ce prince."

The Princess of Eboli was universally believed to have fallen a victim to the quarrel between Antonio Perez and the King, and there is no doubt whatever that Philip ordered her to be slowly stifled to death in her dungeon. He had the windows covered with a double grille which prevented the unhappy woman from opening them, and she complained that she was stifled;

she succumbed, however, very slowly, and two of her servants perished before her; the gaoler himself was saddened by the awful spectacle, and gave the King agonizing accounts of this suffering. That the Princess of Eboli had some hold on Philip, H. Forneron thinks certain, for, even in her death, she never relaxed her attitude of pride and scorn towards the King.

"La princesse d'Eboli, oubliée depuis plusieurs années, fut punie également de la fuite de Perez; le roi fit garnir ses fenêtres d'une double grille qui empêchait de les ouvrir. 'Nous sommes dans l'obscurité, l'air nous manque, nous étouffons' écrivait-elle. . . . Elle versa des larmes dans cette chambre, 'mortelle, obscure, lugubre' ce sont ses mots; elle succomba lentement; deux de ses servantes moururent d'abord; le geôlier attendri adressait au roi des récits de cette déchirante agonie; il rappelait le manque d'air, la fièvre . . . Philippe ne mit aucune note en marge. Peut-être aurait-il entr'ouvert la fenêtre si la femme s'était humiliée . . . ni les souffrances ni la fièvre ne la firent fléchir."

The whole of this story remains obscure, and neither contemporaries nor modern historians are in the least clear as to its details; but there seems no reasonable doubt that the sixteenth century believed that the Princess of Eboli was the real cause of the quarrel between Philip and

Antonio Perez, and that she was herself done to death by stifling as a result of that quarrel; also that she was definitely connected with the tragedy of the Queen's murder and did, either deliberately or unconsciously, awaken Philip's suspicions against his wife. The modern historians are inclined to believe that Antonio Perez used her as a tool to that end.

Now, once again we have remarkable parallels. Emilia is a lady in attendance upon Desdemona; Emilia is in a position to spy upon her mistress and actually does so; Emilia, according to Iago, is the real cause of his intense and violent hatred of Othello, which he himself asserts to be due to jealousy. This fact is usually ignored by Shakespearian commentators because they do not like the light it throws upon the character of Othello; but they have no right to ignore it, because it is repeatedly stressed in the play and is the only sign of a genuine motive that Iago has for his hatred (I. iii.):

> I hate the Moor;
> And it is thought abroad that 'twixt my sheets
> He has done my office: I know not if't be true.

Also (II. i.):

> I do suspect the lusty Moor
> Hath leap'd into my seat; the thought whereof
> Doth, like a poisonous mineral, gnaw my inwards;
> And nothing can or shall content my soul
> Till I am even'd with him, wife for wife.

Modern commentators exclaim in disgust that Othello could not possibly have put Emilia near his wife had Emilia ever, at any time, been his mistress; but the plain meaning of the text suggests this explanation, and it corresponds almost exactly to the historical facts.

Moreover, we have the further circumstance that Emilia is expected to spy upon Desdemona and does so (though without wishing to destroy her), and we have also the circumstance that Emilia herself falls a victim to the hatred between the two men, defies the Moor to the end, and is herself murdered—all of which corresponds closely to the history as the sixteenth century undoubtedly believed it and as modern historians are inclined to believe it.

We notice that here also Shakespeare has altered Cinthio's novel in a way that makes the story correspond more closely to the facts of the history; in Cinthio's novel the part played by Emilia is much less important, because it is not the ensign's wife but the ensign himself who steals the handkerchief; the motive of the ensign is not his jealousy on account of his own wife, but his own love for Desdemona—a motive which simply does not enter into Shakespeare's play at all—and, finally, the ensign's wife does not herself fall a victim; we are told nothing of her fate, and no one apparently injures her.

All this part of the story far more closely

resembles the tale of the Princess of Eboli than it resembles anything in Cinthio.

If Othello really does shadow Spanish history there cannot, of course, be the slightest doubt as to the identity of the Iago—he is Antonio Perez.

Even in that age of terrific crimes the more than mortal hate which subsisted between Philip II. and Antonio Perez was the wonder and the horror of Europe. The long and shocking duel of hatred between the two men did perhaps more than anything else to destroy the reputation of Philip and to lower the prestige of Spain. Antonio Perez, as I have shown, was regarded as one of the people who had done most to stir up Holland, France, and England against Spain. The general outline of the terrible story is sufficiently well known. Antonio Perez was the son of Philip's most confidential and trusted minister, Gonzalo Perez, and was himself for a long time after the death of his father the most trusted servant Philip II. possessed.

Perez took advantage of this confidence to excite the King's jealousy against his brother, Don John of Austria, and also to the murder of Don John's trusted secretary, Escovedo, and (as half Europe believed) to the murder or attempted murder of Don John himself. That Escovedo was murdered by Perez and with the connivance of the King is certain. Philip finally

discovered how Perez had deceived him; Perez was imprisoned and tortured; Perez, however, after much suffering, escaped, fled to France and then to England, and for years remained one of the most dangerous opponents Spain possessed in Europe.

There is no doubt that he was employed as a political weapon against Spain both by Henry of Navarre and by Essex.

Europe, however, regarded him with the utmost disgust and horror, because, whatever personal grievances he might have, he had undoubtedly been the trusted servant of Philip, he had undoubtedly cheated Philip into a disgraceful murder—that of Escovedo—and, though himself a Spaniard, he was doing his utmost to ruin Spain.

Again and again in contemporary pamphlets we find allusions to Philip's moral denseness in allowing a mere servant to gain such an ascendancy over him, to Philip's disgrace in murdering Escovedo at the instigation of this villain, and to Philip's folly in allowing himself to be made jealous of Don John.

The whole story is repeatedly quoted as an example of the besotted moral stupidity of the Spanish Court.

Thus Trajano Boccalini narrates this story in his "New-Found Politik."

He describes how the god Apollo punishes

those who have wrought great evil in Europe by afflicting them with moral blindness: "Two weeks are now past since one of these varlets was presently apprehended and laid up, who by many evidences being found foule and guilty, was laid upon the racke, where he confessed all his horrible tricks, shifts, wiles, circumventions, masks and detestable juglings, that he had used and practised, not only to induce his Master to become his Slave, but even to adore and worship him.

"Apollo, having read and considered the processe and indictment against that monstrous villaine, fell into a strange amazement, how those Princes (who are so greedy of domination that they often fall into moody jealousies and unnatural suspicions not only of strangers but of their own children) may or can (either through their own guiltiness or monstrous fraud of others) fall into that reproachful infamy to become vassals and even slaves unto a base rascally servant of theirs.

". . . He had induced him to believe that his treacherous plots and practices to make him fall out with his own Son and other princes of the blood, was an unfeigned zeal of inward love and hearty affection towards him: a spotless charity towards the public benefit of his people: and that by his quaint artifices and jugling tricks, he had brought him to be so stolid, so

stupid and so gullish that the manifest and insolent tyranny of his base servant . . . was by the unfortunate Prince, named to be a vigilant regard to his service, an easing of him from paines, a disburthening of him from cares.

" . . . All these perfidious treacheries being confessed by that false wretch, so amazed and terrified the Princes that heard them, that with a loud voice they all cried out that to become most rigorously cruel against so impious and wicked a villaine . . . were true and charitable piety.

". . . Each wished to devise some new kind of torment, as might dilaniate and tear in pieces that monster of nature."

Now this, I maintain, is the second leading motive in "Othello." The husband's jealousy is the first and most important; Othello's subservience to the base servant—Iago—is the second most important motive and is intimately connected with the first.

Let us note, in the first place, that the very name—Iago—means someone Spanish. It was the name of the national shrine—St Iago of Compostella. It was as typical of Spain as the Red Cross Knight (St. George) was typical of England.

The situation in the play most closely resembles the story of Antonio Perez as outlined

by Boccalini. Othello is full of moody jealousies and unnatural suspicions against those who most deserve his trust—namely, Desdemona and Cassio. He does fall into the 'reproachful infamy' of becoming a vassal and even a slave to a 'base rascally servant.' Iago is full of 'quaint artifices and jugling tricks'; he does make Othello believe that he is impelled by 'an unfeigned zeal of inward love.' Othello does become 'so stupid and gullish' as to take the 'manifest and insolent tyranny' of Iago for 'a vigilant regard for his service, an easing of him from paines, a disburthening of him from cares.'

We have only to turn to Shakespeare's text to see how exactly similar the situation is (I. iii.). Iago pretends to be Othello's best friend and all the time despises him in his heart and triumphs over him because of his stupid trust:

> The Moor is of a free and open nature,
> That thinks men honest that but seem to be so;
> And will as tenderly be led by the nose
> As asses are.

He revels in Othello's misplaced confidence (II. i.):

> But I'll set down the pegs that make this music,
> As honest as I am.

And again (II. i.):

I'll have our Michael Cassio on the hip . . .
Make the Moor thank me, love me and reward me
For making him egregiously an ass
And practising upon his peace and quiet
Even to madness.

Othello's stupidity is such that it seems perfectly incredible even to Emilia; she cries to him (V. ii.):

O gull! O dolt!
As ignorant as dirt!

And Othello realizes his own stupidity in the end and accuses himself:

O fool! fool! fool!

Antonio Perez certainly entrapped his master to the murder of Escovedo—Philip gave him instructions to bring about that murder which he did, but pleaded the King's commands when accused of it; Perez also made Philip frenziedly jealous of Don John of Austria so that he deposed him from his favour and attempted his life. All these circumstances are paralleled in the play; it is through Iago that Cassio loses the favour of Othello and is deposed from his office of trust; it is to Iago that Othello gives the order for Cassio's murder; the person who does actually fall a victim and is stabbed by Iago himself is Roderigo.

Cassio's very name, be it observed, is symbolical, and means 'the broken,' and a

considerable portion of the play is taken up with Iago's intrigue against him, which most closely resembles the intrigue of Pérez against Don John of Austria, though the jealousy suggested against Don John was not personal but political.*

At the end of the play Iago is carried off to torture. This is what happened to Antonio Perez, who was tortured, his torture having filled the whole Court of Spain with terror, since, if a man once so trusted could fall to such agonies, the insecurity of all was made the more manifest.

It is notable that the Roderigo affair, which I take to refer to the murder of Escovedo, does not occur at all in Cinthio's novel, and could not possibly do so, if I am right, for it did not take place till 1578.

So far as the *political* part of the play is concerned, Iago certainly acts as Antonio Perez acted in real life. The men of the sixteenth century were horrified not only by his treachery to the master who had trusted him, but by *his desire to ruin his own country*. In the symbolic sense we may fairly say that Iago represents that side of Spain: the intriguing, treacherous, unscrupulous Court which destroyed the nobler side—the warrior side.

* See Brantôme, "Don Juan d'Austrie"; also H. Forneron.

The character of Antonio Perez did very markedly resemble the character of Shakespeare's Iago. He possessed one of the acutest intellects of the whole age; he was far-sighted and cunning to a degree and utterly unscrupulous. Europe may have produced, some time or other, a more evil man than Antonio Perez, but it is very doubtful; for utter villainy combined with cold, intellectual skill he had certainly no rival in his own age, and Shakespeare probably knew him and knew him quite well. Was he not likely to be profoundly impressed by such a personality and such a story?

Certainly the whole of Europe regarded with horror the far-reaching duel of hatred between Perez and his master; the passage I have quoted from Boccalini is typical of the attitude even of those who most disliked Spain; they regarded the concentrated hate and the cold, intellectual power of Antonio Perez, and his master's helpless subjection to him, as an almost supernatural example of the power of evil.

Iago's relations to Cassio in the play certainly do resemble very closely those of Perez to Don John of Austria; Perez did profess to be a generous friend to Don John of Austria; he did urge him on to various imprudences and intoxicate him with the idea of power; he did betray him to Philip; he did succeed in making

Philip frenziedly jealous of him; Philip certainly disgraced his half-brother and dismissed him from favour, and, as nearly all Europe believed, either murdered him or, at least, attempted his murder.

The reader will find the whole story summarized by H. Forneron, and the historical parallels between his account of it and Shakespeare's "Othello" are certainly very remarkable. He speaks of the League which was made between Venice and Spain (1571), and which was declared perpetual with a solemn oath; the League was to be provided with forces, whose command was to be entrusted to Don John of Austria.

"La ligue fut enfin jurée, déclarée perpétuelle, pourvue de forces dont le commandemen fut remis à don Juan d'Autriche."

So in Shakespeare's "Othello" we have Cassio from the very beginning associated with Desdemona and Othello; it was, of course, Don John of Austria who commanded the united fleets of Venice and Spain at the Battle of Lepanto (1571), when Cyprus was regained, and whose gallantry did much to win the devotion of the Venetians. So in "Othello" Cassio is present at Cyprus with Desdemona and Othello, and we have Desdemona's word for it that he came wooing with Othello and did much to recommend Othello to her (III. iii.):

> What! Michael Cassio,
> That came a-wooing with you, and so many a time,
> When I have spoke of you dispraisingly,
> Hath ta'en your part.

Cassio, when the play opens, is Othello's chief lieutenant and his second in command.

Don John was greatly given to gallantry, and wasted much of his time in Italy in love-affairs with light women which certainly injured his reputation. As H. Forneron put it, "Don Juan prend plasir aux fêtes et aux galanteries avec les femmes de Naples et de Messine."

The nobles of Naples united in a league called "Los Blancos" or "The Whites"; their aim was to obtain the departure of the Spanish garrisons from Italy, and Don John was the person on whom their hopes were fixed; they thought they might effect their purpose, and Don John probably hoped to be ruler of a quasi-independent Italy, or, at any rate, of those States then under Spanish rule—Sicily, Milan, and Naples.*

After Lepanto (1571) Philip became acutely jealous of Don John; he was jealous of the glory Don John had acquired by the reconquest of Cyprus, and jealous of the impassioned admiration of the Venetians and the other Italians for him; he suspected him of wishing to supplant Spain in Italy.

* See also Brantôme, "Don Juan d'Austrie"

The result was exceedingly disastrous for both Spain and Italy; the victor of Lepanto was not allowed to complete his work, and he had to see it largely destroyed by the loss of Cyprus, Tunis, and Malta to the Turks.

Now, in Shakespeare's "Othello" we have Cassio also represented as amusing himself in his leisure hours with a woman of light character; he is represented as being very like Don John, gay and chivalrous, susceptible of all high emotions, but easily led astray by amours. The woman with whom he intrigues is called 'Bianca,' and she plays an important part in arousing Othello's jealousy. All this certainly shows a close historic parallel; the Bianca of the play would stand both for those ladies of easy virtue with whom Don John wasted his time and frittered away his great designs, and also for the party of the Whites—'Los Blancos' or 'Gli Bianchi'—who wished to get rid of the Spanish garrisons and obtain the national freedom of Italy, and who therefore did so much to excite Philip's anger both against Italy and against Don John.

The setback to the Catholic cause was ascribed by all Europe to Philip's jealousy of Don John: "Les catholiques refuserent de croire qu'un malheur si humiliant n'eût pas d'autre cause que l'envie de Philippe II. contra la fortune de Don Juan."

Philip's jealousy of Don John continued to

increase; it led to the murder of Escovedo (1578), Don John's most trusted friend and servant, and, as the greater part of Europe believed, to the death of Don John himself (1578).

Antonio Perez was certainly responsible for the murder of Escovedo; he did not deny that (he excused himself by urging the King's commands), and he was believed to have been the determining cause in awakening Philip's suspicions against his brother.

William the Silent's "Apology" (1580), "The Anti-Spaniard" (1590), the "Flower-de-Luce" (1593), the "Paræneticall Treatise" (1598), and Agrippa D'Aubigné's "Les Tragiques" (1613), all accuse Philip of these murders and of having plotted the murder of Don John through jealousy, set on by Antonio Perez, after having first disgraced Don John and deposed him from his favour.

So does Iago cause Othello to first disgrace Cassio and depose him from office and then to plan his assassination.

H. Forneron sums up the matter thus: "Cette duplicité qui pousse le jeune prince à sa fin melancolique entraîne en même temps Philippe dans une série de fraudes, de meurtres, de maladresses qui s'enchaînent par une étrange fatalité, pesènt sur les denières années de son règne et detruisent son prestige à l'étranger."

So Othello was involved in a whole series of

frauds, murders, and maladroit acts which were linked together by a strange fatality and which did destroy his reputation in the eyes of the world. It was certainly Antonio Perez who deluded and cheated Philip and so led him into these disgraceful acts.

"Antonio Perez jugea nécessaire de l'engager dans une intrigue dont il aurait seul les fils. Il crut assurer sa fortune en flattant les soupçons de Philippe contre don Juan d'Autriche; il se laissa utiliser pour capter les confidences et assurer la perte de l'homme qui le regardait comme son ami le plus sûr.

". . . Perez noue avec Don Juan et Escovedo une correspondance qu'il leur fait croire secrète, mais dont les minutes sont corrigées de la main du roi; il feint de partager leurs vues pour soustraire leurs aveux et montrer leurs réponses au roi."

Escovedo fell into the snare and dragged with him Don John.

Once again we have the close parallel with "Othello"; Iago does profess a disinterested friendship for both Roderigo and Cassio; he does make them believe that he is ardently and enthusiastically their friend and advocate with Othello, while he is all his time doing his best to destroy them both.

Perez had Escovedo murdered in a street brawl, and it is in a street brawl that Iago with his own hands murders Roderigo.

Perez caused the disgrace of Don John, and broke the heart of the proud and sensitive man so readily susceptible to all high ideals. So Iago disgraces Cassio, who feels that disgrace with the utmost keenness (II. iii.). Iago says:

> Now, 'mongst this flock of drunkards,
> Am I to put our Cassio in some action
> That may offend the isle?

And when Cassio cries out in the utmost bitterness that he has lost his reputation, Iago is simply amused at a grief which he cannot comprehend:

> Reputation, reputation, reputation! O, I have lost my reputation! I have lost the immortal part of myself, and what remains is bestial. My reputation, Iago, my reputation!

And Iago replies:

> As I am an honest man, I thought you had received some bodily wound.

Finally, of course, Othello's anger and jealousy are aroused to such a degree that he gives the order to kill Cassio.

H. Forneron tells us that Philip learnt his mistake in time and bitterly repented of his jealousy of Don John and the consequences to which it had led: "Souvent le rémords le réveillera: il passera bien des nuits avec Fray Diego à Chaves à rappeler sa jalousie fatale contre don Juan d'Autriche et sa crédulitè qui a si légèrement sacrifié Escovedo."

So Shakespeare makes Othello repent before the end alike his jealousy of Cassio and his excessive credulity which had led to such fatal results.

Forneron sums up the whole fatality of Philip's reign in saying that he was impelled by an almost maniacal jealousy and mistrust of all those who served him most faithfully and that it was this which did more than anything else to bring about the ruin of his country.

"Ce fit la continuelle misère de Philippe de se tourner avec une méfiance maniaque contre tous ceux qui pouvaient lui être nécessaires." He was jealous not only of Don John, but also of Granvelle and Alexander Farnese, and he himself felt before the end that his life was accursed because of these jealousies and suspicions. He acknowledged himself accursed because of "l'envie acharnée contre don Juan d'Autriche un élu de Dieu . . . le meurtre d'Escovedo, les braves abandonnés en Hollande par jalousie contre Farnèse. Pour ces péchés il est réprouvé. Sa vie est maudite."

Forneron sums up Philip's whole life by saying that he drove to despair by his jealousy all those who served him best—Don John, Granvelle, Farnese, Santa Cruz.

If Shakespeare wished to write of Spain, it is difficult to see how he could have concentrated

more of the truth in one brief canvas than he has in "Othello."

It seems to me obvious enough what Shakespeare is doing. At the date he wrote "Othello" (*circa* 1604), the burning questions of European politics were the attempts of Spain to subjugate Venice and the quarrel of Venicé with the Pope, which developed into the Papal Interdict of 1606. Englishmen took an impassioned interest in the controversy, and James I. was so deeply concerned that he made himself the champion of Venice before the eyes of all Europe. The position of Venice, weakened by the controversy with the Pope, and therefore placed all the more at the mercy of Spain, was one of the most important problems in the whole European situation; it involved the fate of Italy and the possible subjection of the whole Italian peninsula to Spain and Austria.

There was every reason why Shakespeare should be deeply concerned in that particular situation. As an ardent English nationalist (and the whole series of his historical dramas prove that he was that), he would have the greatest possible sympathy with the struggle of Italian nationality against the overwhelming weight of Spain and Austria.

It is also highly probable that, like most Englishmen of his day, he had an intense

natural admiration for the genius and civilization of Italy, and felt with the most poignant emotion of grief and even terror that that wonderful genius might be overwhelmed and destroyed—stifled by the ascendancy of an alien race—which could not comprehend its supreme greatness.

That is what I believe "Othello" to be—the epic tragedy of Italy. On that awful bed lay stifled the glory and the genius of the most gifted race in the world.

What is more, Shakespeare had probably the acutest personal reasons for apprehension. James's pro-Spanish tendencies must, from the very beginning of his reign, have given cause for apprehension to the nationalist party to which Shakespeare so emphatically belonged, and they would probably take every available means of warning him against a connection with Spain, a connection which had proved so terrible to Holland and France and so fatal to Portugal, Naples, and Milan.*

James's own interest in Venice provided a good excuse. We know that "Othello" was performed before the Court in Whitehall, and Shakespeare would be availing himself of a most excellent opportunity of warning James against

* During the greater part of 1604 James was negotiating a peace with Spain which his people bitterly disliked (see Venetian State Papers).

a nation which, whatever its great and noble qualities might be, was so alien to the true genius of Europe and so destructive to all those united with it.

It has always been a good deal of a mystery why Shakespeare should at this date have chosen an obscure Italian tale from a little-known Italian author. Cinthio had died in 1573; he was a person of very fifth-rate talent; we know of no English version of the story of the Moor, and it is certainly, in the original, not a good story; Mr. Boas describes it as being like a page out of a Venetian Newgate Calendar, and I cordially agree with him. Why should Shakespeare choose this obscure, savage, and ferocious story, raise it to such a height of glory and splendour, and have it performed before his King?

I answer, because Cinthio's novel either bears the closest resemblance to or is itself a part of that Venetian-Spanish history of which Shakespeare wished to treat.

If Cinthio's novel really was suggested by Venetian-Spanish history, it must be practically contemporary with the events it shadows. Elizabeth of Valois died in 1568, and the Treaty of Alliance between Spain and Venice and the Battle of Lepanto belong to the years 1570 and 1571. The Queen's death was declared by many people—particularly, as we have seen, William

the Silent (1580)—to be positively a part of the Spanish plot against Italy, and was very naturally taken as a sort of symbol of the fate of Italy.

I do not think that any member of Shakespeare's audience could fail to see the resemblance between "Othello" and Spanish history. All the world knew that Philip II. had been accused of the murder of an innocent and noble wife whom he adored, was supposed to have murdered her through jealousy and because of an intrigue in which one of her ladies was concerned, and in which the fatal evidence against her was that of an accidentally dropped handkerchief seen in the hands of a gallant; the tale further said that her husband had murdered her with his own hands in her bed. The Princess of Eboli had played a part very like the part of Emilia in the play, and had herself fallen a victim as Emilia fell. Add that all Europe had witnessed the appalling tragedy of Philip's subjection to Antonio Perez, a villain in whom he placed implicit confidence, who had played upon his credulity and led him to the murder of Escovedo and possibly his brother, and whose rival in love he was supposed to have been, and I do not see how any educated person could possibly miss parallels so obvious and so striking.

Ever since William the Silent's "Apology" in 1580 Spain itself had been commonly per-

sonified as a Moor, and Philip himself as possessed of a more than Moorish jealousy; everyone knew that his persistent jealousy against all who served him best had been the great curse of his reign.

Philip II.'s reign embodied a mass of the most striking and wonderful dramatic material. "Othello" embodies several of the most dramatic 'motives,' and "The Tempest" (as I shall hope to show later) embodies several more.

The motives embodied in "Othello" are the murder of the innocent and beloved wife through jealousy, the attempted murder of Don John through jealousy, the terrible blind moral slavery to the brilliantly intellectual but insanely wicked Antonio Perez, who juggled and tricked Philip into his worst misdeeds—misdeeds which he repented in vain.

All this is, I believe, only symbolic of Spanish temper and Spanish history. "Othello" is thus both a personal tragedy and an epic tragedy. The personal tragedy is real and is as poignant and terrible as anything ever conceived in fiction; but beyond that is the epic tragedy—the threatened ruin of the glorious civilization of Italy.

That the *subject* of "Othello" can be so interpreted is obvious, because Alessandro Tassoni does so interpret it. For him the tragedy of the Moorish soldier of adventure,

the romantic and the heroic, wooing the lovely lady of Venice, slandering her and murdering her and dying himself, for Alessandro Tassoni (1615) this subject *does* mean the tragedy of Italy and Spain. His interpretation is so close to Shakespeare's play that I believe it to be drawn from Shakespeare's play, but undeniably and certainly it is the same *subject* and the leading characters have the strongest psychological resemblance to Shakespeare's. What is more, it is in accord with all we know of sixteenth-century art.

Spenser treated the epic of Europe in "The Faerie Queene"; Agrippa D'Aubigné treated the epic of Europe in "Les Tragiques." Was Shakespeare's mind less noble than theirs? Or was it less inclusive? Or less great? He wrote for the same sort of audience at much the same time.

Let us note that, if "Othello" is to be interpreted in this way it is much less pessimistic than most people have believed. As generally explained, Desdemona is a perfectly noble and innocent wife, Othello is an entirely noble husband, only led astray by Iago's amazing astuteness, and it is Othello's very nobleness which makes him the prey of the villain.

This is surely the blackest of pessimism. I

do not believe that Shakespeare intended it. It is the *moral blindness* of Othello which makes him unable to comprehend moral values, which therefore makes it possible for him to suspect both Cassio and Desdemona, and at the same time to place implicit confidence in Iago. It is this moral blindness which leads Othello to his ruin, and it was a similar moral blindness which was leading Spain to her ruin.

It is when we put Tassoni's book side by side with Shakespeare that we see, I maintain, his true meaning.

The tragedy of Desdemona's fate is that she so loves and trusts the alien and the Moor; it is a love so unnatural that even Othello feels it, and it surprises him that "she had eyes and chose me" (III. iii), while her father was so amazed that he declared to the whole Senate it must have been achieved by witchcraft (I. iii.):

> She is abused, stol'n from me, and corrupted
> By spells and medicines bought of mountebanks;
> For nature so preposterously to err,
> Being not deficient, blind, or lame of sense,
> Sans witchcraft could not.

This is exactly the same sort of language that Tassoni employs concerning the bewitching of Italy by Spain, and he, be it noted, admitted most fully the admirable qualities of Spain—the valour, the chivalry, the lofty spirit of adventure, the love of great renown, the scorn

of peril—these are exactly the noble qualities of Shakespeare's Moor, and Tassoni admits them all as characteristic of his Moorish adventurer who is Spain.

Modern commentators are inclined to underestimate the profound importance of speeches like Brabantio's because they fail to realize the intense moral and physical repugnance that Shakespeare's age felt for Moors. Imagine Othello a full-blooded negro, and imagine the play acted to an audience of southern state Americans, and we have the same feelings of horror that would be likely to inspire Shakespeare's audience.

The extracts I have already given show how the word 'Moor' is habitually employed as a term of abuse, and I would refer the reader also to "Titus Andronicus," where the Moor 'Aaron' is a most abominable and frightful villain, or to the Second Book of Spenser's "Faerie Queene," where the three Saracens are three deadly villains, in order to see what the Elizabethan point of view really was.

As a matter of fact, the colour 'black' was in itself considered as a sign that a man was devil-possessed, as in "Tyl Ulenspiegel," where the devils appear as black men. The body of Henry III. of France turned black after his death, and his Catholic opponents cite this as a proof that he was not really a human being

at all, but a devil; to us this reasoning seems positively comic, but it was quite characteristic of the peculiar horror attached to 'blackness' in Shakespeare's age.

Since I was quite a young student I have never been able to understand why, if the ordinary interpretation of the play be correct, Shakespeare should ever have dared to make his hero a Moor, because that was *with his audience* to stultify his plan at the outset. Try to imagine a similar circumstance to-day. Let us assume that a dramatist of the southern states of America chooses the following subject: he wishes to show a hero so morally blind that he is in abject submission to an appalling villain, so blind that he murders (really on the most unsatisfactory evidence) a loyal and devoted wife, and attempts the murder of an entirely loyal friend, and let us further assume that, in spite of these remarkable circumstances, our southern state dramatist wishes to convince his audience that his hero is an entirely noble person and, from beginning to end, a much wronged sufferer. Will he commence by making his hero a negro?

Of course not! He knows perfectly well that he would make his audience howl with insane rage, and probably wish to raise a riot and storm the stage. The play would confirm every one of their prejudices against miscegena-

tion, and they would be much more inclined to lynch Othello than to sympathize with him. Now, the Moor was to Shakespeare's England all that the negro is to Southern America.

Even modern English writers have felt the difficulty. Charles Lamb did not think "Othello" suitable for acting because, on the stage, Othello's black face alienated the sympathies of the audience. Of course it did! And, equally of course, it would alienate the sympathies of Shakespeare's audience almost inconceivably more. Coleridge also feels the difficulty, and, as Professor Bradley has shown, attempts disingenuously to minimize that difficulty by making Othello not black but brown. This plainly contradicts the text, which insists that Othello is black; Iago emphasizes in the coarsest way the 'blackness' of Othello as contrasted with the whiteness of Desdemona; Othello is a 'black ram' and Desdemona is a 'white ewe' (I. i.); Brabantio declares that he has a 'sooty bosom,' and that Desdemona at first 'feared to look' on him (I. iii), and Othello himself repeatedly admits that he is black (III. iii):

> Haply for I am black.
>
> * * * * *
>
> Her name that was fresh
> As Dian's visage, is now begrimed and black
> As mine own face.

They are all agreed about it, he himself included, that he is black, and, to the sixteenth century, being 'black' was as definite a sign of evil as being possessed of a complete outfit of horns, hoofs, and a tail.

Nor does Shakespeare ever allow us to forget that there is an aspect of Othello which is fearsome to a degree. Iago calls attention to his lustful love in the coarsest way when he calls him a 'black ram' and a 'Barbary horse' (I. i.).

Roderigo agrees and so does Brabantio; the latter is convinced that Desdemona's love for him must be an affair of witchcraft; Othello must have used 'spells and medicines bought of mountebanks,' for nature could not otherwise 'so preposterously have erred' (I. iii.):

> I therefore vouch again
> That with some mixture powerful o'er the blood,
> Or with some dram conjur'd to this effect
> He wrought upon her.

Iago convinces Othello himself that there is a 'foul disproportion' between himself and Desdemona.

All this is, I repeat, exactly like Tassoni's description of the essential disproportion of nature between his Moorish adventurer and his Venetian lady.

Tassoni insists on the innate ferocity of his Moorish soldier, and we see this quality also in Shakespeare's Othello; when Othello begins

to be genuinely convinced of his wife's infidelity he turns almost inconceivably ferocious (III. iii.)—

> I'll tear her all to pieces,

and wishes that Cassio had 'forty thousand lives' that he might take them all for his revenge. Desdemona, in the last dreadful scene, calls our attention to his savagery when she says (V. ii.):

> And yet I fear you; for you are more fatal then
> When your eyes roll so.

There is, undoubtedly, this fatal disproportion between them which everybody recognizes except the unlucky Desdemona herself; there is this element of evil, of lust and horror and frenzy and sheer downright cruelty in Othello, and yet there is, at the same time, as everyone recognizes, the marvellous fascination, the romance, the valour.

It is impossible to get over the difficulty presented by a black hero to a seventeenth-century audience; it is impossible to evade the difficulty, as Coleridge does, by making Othello brown, for the text contradicts him; it is impossible to deny that Othello justifies the horror which his visage inspires, for, when excited, he becomes inspired with the most intense and lascivious jealousy, and, when angry, he is consumed with the most horrible

blood-lust; we observe also that he continually desires to torture with the most horrible tortures the people whom he hates. But, if so horrible to the age of Shakespeare, if so really repulsive, then why so noble?

All these contradictions are resolved and the attitude of Shakespeare's audience is fully comprehensible if we are to understand that Shakespeare's Moorish soldier of adventure is like Tassoni's Moorish soldier of adventure—the power of Spain. I insist that Othello and Tassoni's Moor *are identical characters*—their faults are the same, their virtues are the same.

If Othello is Spain, that explains alike his horror, his fearsomeness, and his fascination; he has all the qualities of Spain, the noble and great as well as the ignoble and terrible, at least as Shakespeare's age saw and recognized these qualities.

Othello is a great soldier; everyone admits that, and his own language shows that he is full of the soldier's high sentiment of honour, and that it is his fame as a soldier which is dearest to him (I. iii.):

> The tyrant custom, most grave senators,
> Hath made the flinty and steel couch of war
> My thrice-driven bed of down.

And, in the grip of his tragedy:

> O, now, for ever,
> Farewell the tranquil mind! farewell content!
> Farewell the plumed troop and the big wars
> That make ambition virtue! O farewell!
> Farewell the neighing steed, and the shrill trump,
> The spirit-stirring drum, the ear-piercing fife,
> The royal banner, and all quality,
> Pride, pomp and circumstance of glorious war.

This is exactly the Spanish temperament; the Spanish veterans were acknowledged as the finest infantry in Europe; everyone admitted their steel-hard endurance, their fortitude, their power of supporting the cruellest hardships, their valour, their high sentiment of honour, and their calmness in peril.

Note that the very music is the same; the Spaniards did fight to the sound of drums and fifes, as Othello says he fought, a fact for which the English seamen rather despised them, for they—the English seamen—demanded the music of violins.*

Othello's martial music is the martial music of Spain; his banner is a 'royal banner' like Spain's, and his sword is, as he himself tells us, a 'sword of Spain' (V. ii.):

> I have another weapon in this chamber:
> It is a sword of Spain, the ice-brook's temper.

Why should he have alike the music of Spain and the sword of Spain if he is not Spanish?

Again, the Spanish veterans were accustomed

* Corbett, "Francis Drake."

to live so completely in the field that they were permitted to take their wives with them, and so Othello claims the right to take Desdemona and finds that right allowed (I. iii.).

Spanish calmness in peril, Spanish dignity, were famous throughout Europe; so Othello is calm and intensely dignified in any dangerous crisis; he says to the men who threaten him:

> Keep up your bright swords, for the dew will rust them.

And again, as I have pointed out, and as hardly any modern commentator has seemed to realize, Othello is as much sailor as soldier. His most magnificent metaphors are drawn from the sea; his very veins pulse with the pulse of its tides (III. iii.):

> Like to the Pontic sea,
> Whose icy current and compulsive course
> Ne'er feels retiring ebb, but keeps due on
> To the Propontic and the Hellespont;
> Even so my bloody thoughts, with violent pace,
> Shall ne'er look back.

And, when he has reached the last of life, he cries (V. ii.):

> Here is my butt
> And very sea-mark of my utmost sail.

In the magnificent passage I have quoted before, the one in which he recounts his wooing of Desdemona and the history of his own life (I. iii.), he represents himself as one of the

greatest adventurers of the world; he has suffered 'disastrous chances,' 'moving accidents by flood and field'; he has been in the 'imminent deadly breach'; he has undergone great travels; like Tassoni's Moor, he has wandered through 'deserts idle'; like Tassoni's Moor, he has been among the 'anthropophagi'; he has been one of the earth's greatest and most fearless adventurers, exactly like Spain.

He repeats, as I have said, the most remarkable incidents in the history of Spain. He has himself been in captivity to the 'insolent foe,' and escaped from it, and the deed of which, when he is dying, he is most proud is that 'he smote the Turk.'

Why should he, like Spain, have been in a barbaric captivity; why should he, like Spain, have 'smitten the Turk,' if he is not Spain? He had smitten the Turk, as Spain had, in a quarrel on behalf of Venice.

We also observe that Othello speaks as if he were definitely a Christian as opposed to the Turks (II. iii):

> Are we turn'd Turks, and to ourselves do that
> Which heaven hath forbid the Ottamites?
> For Christian shame, put by this barbarous brawl.

And just as the grander elements of the character coincide with the grander elements of Spain, so do the baser and more terrible elements coincide with those of Spain. The

Spaniards were always accused of keeping their women in an almost Oriental seclusion which they had learnt from the Moors, and guarding them with an Oriental suspicion; they were accused of lascivious love and easily aroused jealousy.*

Iago throughout lays stress upon Othello's lasciviousness, and, though there is a most noble and lofty element in his love, yet there is a savage lust as well.

The Spaniards were incessantly accused of this jealousy and suspicion in relation to other countries no less than in relation to their own personal life.

Again, the Spaniards, when angry, were capable of the most frightful frenzy of blood-lust; the 'Spanish fury' at Antwerp had appalled all Europe, and it was only the worst of many similar frenzies; I need hardly remark that the Spaniards were notorious for the terrible tortures they inflicted on the unhappy victims of their Inquisition.

Now, this again is exactly the case with Othello; when he is once angry he cannot control his blood-lust, he roars for blood like a wild beast, an 'arrabiato lupo,' as Tassoni puts it, and he incessantly longs to mutilate and torture his enemies; he only regrets that there are limits to the tortures which the human

* See H. Forneron, "Histoire de Philippe II."

frame can be brought to bear. He regrets that the human capacity for suffering is limited at all; he would have it eternal to gratify *his* wrath and *his* hate. He warns Iago (III. iii):

> Thou hadst better have been born a dog
> Than answer my naked wrath;

he moans for "blood, blood, blood"; he longs to cut off Cassio's nose and throw it to a dog (IV. i.), and his immediate question to Iago when he has seen the handkerchief in Bianca's possession is, "How shall I murder him, Iago?" and he wishes him nine years of solid torture, "I would have him nine years a-killing"; he moans one moment over Desdemona, "the pity of it, Iago," and the next declares that he will "chop her into messes"; and in the last awful scene he says (V. i.):

> Had all his hairs been lives, my great revenge
> Had stomach for them all.

Let us also observe one highly significant fact: that all the most crucial events in the relationship of Desdemona and Othello *take place in the presence of the official representatives of Venice.* I have already pointed out that Othello's right to marriage with Desdemona has to be ratified in the full presence of the Venetian Senate (I. iii.); the marriage is not valid until *they* ratify it, exactly as if it were

a treaty of alliance. Then, again, it is *in the presence of the Venetian ambassador*, Lodovico, that Othello makes his first overt breach with Desdemona, when he strikes her in public and calls her a devil (IV. i.). The ambassador promptly takes her part, rebukes Othello, chides him for his insult, and it is precisely *in that scene* that he is told he is to be recalled and that Cassio is to take his place, and Lodovico's comments show us that it is this scene which makes him believe Othello unworthy of his relation to Venice. The personal alienation and the official alienation proceed side by side, just as the marriage—the personal union—coincides with the opening of the official employment.

Finally, in the last scene of all (V. ii.), the Venetian ambassador appears immediately after Desdemona's death, and it is he who pronounces judgment on Othello and then expressly says that he must narrate these matters to the State. Could Shakespeare have shown us more plainly that his Venetian lady has the same meaning as Tassoni's Venetian lady? Not one of these episodes is present in Cinthio's novel; Shakespeare has added them all himself, and they prove beyond the possibility of doubt, I think, that his meaning is the same as Tassoni's.

Desdemona's State is *officially* present at her

marriage, *officially* protests against the insults offered to her, *officially* is present at her death. We are never allowed to forget that the State of Venice accompanies Desdemona.

We note also that the Turkish fleet is destroyed immediately after the arrival of Desdemona, Othello, and Cassio in Cyprus; it was, of course, destroyed in the Battle of Lepanto (1571), immediately after Don John had brought the united fleets of Venice and Spain to the deliverance of Cyprus; and this very event is said by Shakespeare to coincide with the celebration of Othello's nuptial. The very same bonfires are lit to celebrate both.

The Herald proclaims:

> It is Othello's pleasure, our noble and valiant general, that, upon certain tidings now arrived, importing the mere perdition of the Turkish fleet, every man put himself into triumph: some to dance, some to make bonfires, each man to what sport and revels his addiction leads him; for, besides these beneficial news, it is the celebration of his nuptial (II. ii.).

I really do not know how Shakespearian scholars can have overlooked scenes so intensely significant and so very plain.

It is immediately after this that Cassio's disgrace follows, and the disgrace of Don John of Austria did follow hard upon the Battle of Lepanto (II. iii.).

It is in the same scene that Iago tells us he had

learnt to drink in England, which implies that, like Antonio Perez, he had been in England.

Let me summarize the material so far:

1. There exists a whole European mythology symbolizing Spain as a Moor and Venice as a woman, and dealing with the wooing of Venice by Spain. It is found in Holland, France, and Italy alike.

2. Cinthio's novel closely resembles this mythology; it may be a part of it, though this is not certain, but it does resemble it.

3. Shakespeare has altered Cinthio's novel in many respects, and every one of his alterations tends in the direction of making the story more closely resemble Spanish history.

4. Tassoni, in his "Philippics," tells the story of the wooing of a Venetian lady by a Moorish soldier of adventure, which marriage he declares will result in the murder of the lady and the death of the Moor. His analysis of their characters and the psychology of their union corresponds in the closest possible way to Shakespeare's story of Desdemona and Othello, and Tassoni explains clearly that the Moor is Spain and the lady Venice.

5. Shakespeare has added to Cinthio's novel Desdemona's repudiation by her father, which corresponds to the Papal interdict upon Venice (1606).

6. Shakespeare has added to Cinthio's novel the fact that Desdemona's marriage has to be ratified by the Venetian Senate, the scene in which she is insulted in the presence of the Venetian ambassador, and the fact that the Venetian ambassador is present at her death—all of which seem to identify Othello with Tassoni's view.

7. Shakespeare has added the story of Roderigo's murder, which closely resembles the murder of Escovedo.

8. Shakespeare has added the story of Emilia and her death, which closely resembles the story of the Princess of Eboli and her relation to the supposed murder of Elizabeth of Valois.

9. The episode of the dropped handkerchief plays the central part in the murder (through jealousy) of Philip II.'s Queen—Elizabeth of Valois. Shakespeare has considerably altered this episode also and made it more closely resemble the historical tragedy.

10. Shakespeare has practically created the terrific character of Iago, who corresponds in his psychology closely to Antonio Perez, and whose relations to Othello are exactly the relations of Antonio Perez to Philip II.

11. Shakespeare has added the significant name of Iago (unnamed in Cinthio) and of Bianca (also unnamed in Cinthio).

12. Shakespeare has caused the ratification of

Othello's marriage to Desdemona before the Venetian Senate to take place at the same time as the sending of the Venetian fleet to deliver Cyprus from the Turks, and has caused Othello's nuptial to be celebrated on *the same day* as the Battle of Lepanto.

It is absolutely certain that Shakespeare's "Othello" deals with the same *subject* as Tassoni's "Philippics," and I think the above demonstration makes it practically certain that the subject has the same *meaning* in Shakespeare as in Tassoni.

It is difficult to say whether there is or is not a *direct* relation between Shakespeare's "Othello" and Tassoni and Boccalini; but the resemblances, to Tassoni especially, are so close that I believe there is. Let me remind the reader that "Othello" is generally ascribed to the year 1604. It cannot be later, as it was produced on November 1, 1604, in the old Banqueting House at Whitehall. So far as we know, it was not published till the quarto of 1622.

Boccalini's "Touchstone of Politics" was published in 1612, and his "New-Found Politik" possibly in 1613; at any rate, it cannot be later, as his death occurred in that year. Tassoni's "Philippics" in the collected form date *circa* 1615.

Both Boccalini and Tassoni were impassioned pro-Venetian patriots, and it is exceedingly probable that their English friends would perform before them or show them in MS. any strongly pro-Venetian English play, especially if importance had been given to such a play by its performance before the King.

I think there can be no reasonable doubt that "Othello" is both a personal tragedy and an epic tragedy; the personal tragedy is based on a terrible, sombre, and gloomy episode of Spanish history which all Protestant Europe, at any rate, knew of and believed to be a fact. The epic tragedy is the tragedy of Italy and Spain; Shakespeare, like most of his countrymen, probably felt the intensest possible sympathy for Italy, and he had, in addition, the strong personal motive of a desire to protect England; he did not wish England to be the 'tragic loading' of Othello's marriage bed.

If "Othello" really is his portrait of his great enemy, we can only say that in its terror, its magnificence, and its romance it is worthy alike of his genius and his generosity.

NOTE

A very curious version of Philip II.'s relations to his Queen will be found in Thomas Dekker's play, "Match-Mee in London" (1631), which he calls a "tragic-comedy of Spain."

The play has a double plot: one part consists of Philip II.'s jealousy of Don John of Austria; he employs a certain 'Iago' to ruin him, who professes friendship to Don John even while betraying him, and who is also Philip's confidant in his jealousy of his wife.

The main plot, however, consists of Philip's relations to his Queen and Tormiella. The King is intensely and unjustly jealous of his wife; at the same time he is in love with Tormiella, whom he places in attendance upon his wife and wishes to employ as a spy. The Queen is greatly enraged, partly by her husband's unjust suspicion, partly by his infidelity, and she even threatens Tormiella with death; the latter, however, convinces the Queen of her innocence, and the two women form a sort of league, which still more greatly enrages the King, who gives the order for the murder of the Queen.

He is made to believe that the murder has been carried out, and is filled with remorse and despair; but he is told that, after all, he has not been obeyed. He is reconciled to the Queen and all ends happily.

The reminiscences of "Othello" in this play are numerous and important. The most significant is the name of 'Iago' for the villain who betrays Don John and to whom the King confides his jealousy.

King. Iago see.
Looke all, bind fast this Divell, is there no Circle
To be damn'd in but mine?
Queen. Slave! let me go.
King. Oh thou lustful harlot.
Queen. Guard me heaven.

* * * * *

Let me have justice, as thou art a King.
King. To prison with them both.
Queen. As I am thy wife
Make not thyself a strumpet of me.
King. Hence, guard her.
Queen. I come Heaven, guarded with innocence.
King. Follow your Mistress, you!
Tormiella. Yes, to her grave!
Oh that I now were swallowed in some wave.
(*Exit both*).
King. O that I
Should in a woman's lap my kingdom lay,
Honour and life, and she should all betray
To a Groome, a slave.
Iago. Let not her poison run
Too neare your heart.
King. Iago, I have done.

Equally significant is the scene where the King is told of the Queen's death and that she died asserting her innocence to the end; the King cries—

My deere, dearest Queene is dead,

and asks:

What said she last?

His servant answers:

Commend me to the king.
And tell him thus, mine honour is not wreck'd
Though his love bee.

The King laments that his name will henceforth be a wounded name, and the fact that she lives is then revealed to him.

There are other reminiscences, but these will serve as examples.

I cannot offer any explanation of why Dekker's plot should differ so markedly in its conclusion from the ordinary versions of the tale; Shakespeare's "Othello" is far closer, alike to the versions current and to the facts of Spanish history. A possible suggestion is that Dekker could not endure its tragedy and found a happy ending, much as the eighteenth-century altered "King Lear."

APPENDIX

SINCE writing the preceding book I have come across a pamphlet which gives an important confirmation of the views expressed. This is Edward Daunce's "A Brief Discourse of the Spanish State," written by a Dutchman, but published in English in 1590.

This contains a psychological analysis of the Spanish character, and is particularly interesting as showing in what way the name "Othello" may have been suggested to Shakespeare.

Like everybody else, the writer describes the Spaniards as being of Moorish descent, and therefore cruel, suspicious, and treacherous. Their fame and power in the world are quite newly acquired and by the power of the sword. They inhabit a country which is largely desert and burnt by the heat of the sun, and one of their main characteristics is the extreme intemperance and violence of their passions.

All other creatures and even beasts spare those of their own family; but *the family of the Othmani and the Spaniards alone* are distinguished by this: that they will kill even their own children *and their chaste wives.* Such a

fact — the killing of chaste wives through jealousy — is known to no other nation, but is characteristic of Spain.

The writer instances especially the case of Philip II., who murdered his chaste wife largely because he was so exasperated by her continual pleas for mercy to his victims, the particular victims the writer quotes being Don Carlos and the unhappy Belgians. He was enraged because her compassion formed a check on his own unrestrained anger.

Here, it will be seen, we have asserted a definite comparison of Spain *with the Othmani alone upon earth;* we have it asserted that it is a *characteristic of theirs to murder, unjustly, chaste wives, excited to anger by the wife's compassion.* These are, surely, the definite traits Shakespeare has embodied in "Othello."

Daunce goes on to state that their passions lead them to be just as violent, cruel, and destructive to the countries under their rule as they are to individuals. The same passion leads them to destroy the one and the other.

Envy is another leading vice of the Spaniards, and is especially characteristic of this nation, who hate all that is above them. Here, again, Shakespeare would seem to have embodied a leading Spanish vice in Iago.

Edward Daunce's pamphlet is not yet mythology, but it contains the leading elements

which we find in both Shakespeare and Tassoni.

I would also refer the reader again to Adolphus van Dans's poem, "De Laudibus Elisabethæ," which, though in Latin, is most important for the study of the age. The writer persistently calls the Spaniards "Moors." Philip II. of Spain is "the rejoicing Moor," sending his fleet to violate the maiden Elisabeth and her virgin land; it is always the "Moorish" fleet, and the army it carries is always the "Moorish" army. It is carried away by "barbarian" rage, and, if it had succeeded, it would have murdered alike queen and country.

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do not believe that Shakespeare intended it. It is the *moral blindness* of Othello which makes him unable to comprehend moral values, which therefore makes it possible for him to suspect both Cassio and Desdemona, and at the same time to place implicit confidence in Iago. It is this moral blindness which leads Othello to his ruin, and it was a similar moral blindness which was leading Spain to her ruin.

It is when we put Tassoni's book side by side with Shakespeare that we see, I maintain, his true meaning.

The tragedy of Desdemona's fate is that she so loves and trusts the alien and the Moor; it is a love so unnatural that even Othello feels it, and it surprises him that "she had eyes and chose me" (III. iii), while her father was so amazed that he declared to the whole Senate it must have been achieved by witchcraft (I. iii.):

> She is abused, stol'n from me, and corrupted
> By spells and medicines bought of mountebanks;
> For nature so preposterously to err,
> Being not deficient, blind, or lame of sense,
> Sans witchcraft could not.

This is exactly the same sort of language that Tassoni employs concerning the bewitching of Italy by Spain, and he, be it noted, admitted most fully the admirable qualities of Spain—the valour, the chivalry, the lofty spirit of adventure, the love of great renown, the scorn

of peril—these are exactly the noble qualities of Shakespeare's Moor, and Tassoni admits them all as characteristic of his Moorish adventurer who is Spain.

Modern commentators are inclined to underestimate the profound importance of speeches like Brabantio's because they fail to realize the intense moral and physical repugnance that Shakespeare's age felt for Moors. Imagine Othello a full-blooded negro, and imagine the play acted to an audience of southern state Americans, and we have the same feelings of horror that would be likely to inspire Shakespeare's audience.

The extracts I have already given show how the word 'Moor' is habitually employed as a term of abuse, and I would refer the reader also to "Titus Andronicus," where the Moor 'Aaron' is a most abominable and frightful villain, or to the Second Book of Spenser's "Faerie Queene," where the three Saracens are three deadly villains, in order to see what the Elizabethan point of view really was.

As a matter of fact, the colour 'black' was in itself considered as a sign that a man was devil-possessed, as in "Tyl Ulenspiegel," where the devils appear as black men. The body of Henry III. of France turned black after his death, and his Catholic opponents cite this as a proof that he was not really a human being

at all, but a devil; to us this reasoning seems positively comic, but it was quite characteristic of the peculiar horror attached to 'blackness' in Shakespeare's age.

Since I was quite a young student I have never been able to understand why, if the ordinary interpretation of the play be correct, Shakespeare should ever have dared to make his hero a Moor, because that was *with his audience* to stultify his plan at the outset. Try to imagine a similar circumstance to-day. Let us assume that a dramatist of the southern states of America chooses the following subject: he wishes to show a hero so morally blind that he is in abject submission to an appalling villain, so blind that he murders (really on the most unsatisfactory evidence) a loyal and devoted wife, and attempts the murder of an entirely loyal friend, and let us further assume that, in spite of these remarkable circumstances, our southern state dramatist wishes to convince his audience that his hero is an entirely noble person and, from beginning to end, a much wronged sufferer. Will he commence by making his hero a negro?

Of course not! He knows perfectly well that he would make his audience howl with insane rage, and probably wish to raise a riot and storm the stage. The play would confirm every one of their prejudices against miscegena-

tion, and they would be much more inclined to lynch Othello than to sympathize with him. Now, the Moor was to Shakespeare's England all that the negro is to Southern America.

Even modern English writers have felt the difficulty. Charles Lamb did not think "Othello" suitable for acting because, on the stage, Othello's black face alienated the sympathies of the audience. Of course it did! And, equally of course, it would alienate the sympathies of Shakespeare's audience almost inconceivably more. Coleridge also feels the difficulty, and, as Professor Bradley has shown, attempts disingenuously to minimize that difficulty by making Othello not black but brown. This plainly contradicts the text, which insists that Othello is black; Iago emphasizes in the coarsest way the 'blackness' of Othello as contrasted with the whiteness of Desdemona; Othello is a 'black ram' and Desdemona is a 'white ewe' (I. i.); Brabantio declares that he has a 'sooty bosom,' and that Desdemona at first 'feared to look' on him (I. iii), and Othello himself repeatedly admits that he is black (III. iii):

> Haply for I am black.
>
> * * * * *
>
> Her name that was fresh
> As Dian's visage, is now begrimed and black
> As mine own face.

They are all agreed about it, he himself included, that he is black, and, to the sixteenth century, being 'black' was as definite a sign of evil as being possessed of a complete outfit of horns, hoofs, and a tail.

Nor does Shakespeare ever allow us to forget that there is an aspect of Othello which is fearsome to a degree. Iago calls attention to his lustful love in the coarsest way when he calls him a 'black ram' and a 'Barbary horse' (I. i.).

Roderigo agrees and so does Brabantio; the latter is convinced that Desdemona's love for him must be an affair of witchcraft; Othello must have used 'spells and medicines bought of mountebanks,' for nature could not otherwise 'so preposterously have erred' (I. iii.):

> I therefore vouch again
> That with some mixture powerful o'er the blood,
> Or with some dram conjur'd to this effect
> He wrought upon her.

Iago convinces Othello himself that there is a 'foul disproportion' between himself and Desdemona.

All this is, I repeat, exactly like Tassoni's description of the essential disproportion of nature between his Moorish adventurer and his Venetian lady.

Tassoni insists on the innate ferocity of his Moorish soldier, and we see this quality also in Shakespeare's Othello; when Othello begins

to be genuinely convinced of his wife's infidelity he turns almost inconceivably ferocious (III. iii.)—

> I'll tear her all to pieces,

and wishes that Cassio had 'forty thousand lives' that he might take them all for his revenge. Desdemona, in the last dreadful scene, calls our attention to his savagery when she says (V. ii.):

> And yet I fear you; for you are more fatal then
> When your eyes roll so.

There is, undoubtedly, this fatal disproportion between them which everybody recognizes except the unlucky Desdemona herself; there is this element of evil, of lust and horror and frenzy and sheer downright cruelty in Othello, and yet there is, at the same time, as everyone recognizes, the marvellous fascination, the romance, the valour.

It is impossible to get over the difficulty presented by a black hero to a seventeenth-century audience; it is impossible to evade the difficulty, as Coleridge does, by making Othello brown, for the text contradicts him; it is impossible to deny that Othello justifies the horror which his visage inspires, for, when excited, he becomes inspired with the most intense and lascivious jealousy, and, when angry, he is consumed with the most horrible

blood-lust; we observe also that he continually desires to torture with the most horrible tortures the people whom he hates. But, if so horrible to the age of Shakespeare, if so really repulsive, then why so noble?

All these contradictions are resolved and the attitude of Shakespeare's audience is fully comprehensible if we are to understand that Shakespeare's Moorish soldier of adventure is like Tassoni's Moorish soldier of adventure—the power of Spain. I insist that Othello and Tassoni's Moor *are identical characters*—their faults are the same, their virtues are the same.

If Othello is Spain, that explains alike his horror, his fearsomeness, and his fascination; he has all the qualities of Spain, the noble and great as well as the ignoble and terrible, at least as Shakespeare's age saw and recognized these qualities.

Othello is a great soldier; everyone admits that, and his own language shows that he is full of the soldier's high sentiment of honour, and that it is his fame as a soldier which is dearest to him (I. iii.):

> The tyrant custom, most grave senators,
> Hath made the flinty and steel couch of war
> My thrice-driven bed of down.

And, in the grip of his tragedy:

> O, now, for ever,
> Farewell the tranquil mind! farewell content!
> Farewell the plumed troop and the big wars
> That make ambition virtue! O farewell!
> Farewell the neighing steed, and the shrill trump,
> The spirit-stirring drum, the ear-piercing fife,
> The royal banner, and all quality,
> Pride, pomp and circumstance of glorious war.

This is exactly the Spanish temperament; the Spanish veterans were acknowledged as the finest infantry in Europe; everyone admitted their steel-hard endurance, their fortitude, their power of supporting the cruellest hardships, their valour, their high sentiment of honour, and their calmness in peril.

Note that the very music is the same; the Spaniards did fight to the sound of drums and fifes, as Othello says he fought, a fact for which the English seamen rather despised them, for they—the English seamen—demanded the music of violins.*

Othello's martial music is the martial music of Spain; his banner is a 'royal banner' like Spain's, and his sword is, as he himself tells us, a 'sword of Spain' (V. ii.):

> I have another weapon in this chamber:
> It is a sword of Spain, the ice-brook's temper.

Why should he have alike the music of Spain and the sword of Spain if he is not Spanish?

Again, the Spanish veterans were accustomed

* Corbett, "Francis Drake."

to live so completely in the field that they were permitted to take their wives with them, and so Othello claims the right to take Desdemona and finds that right allowed (I. iii.).

Spanish calmness in peril, Spanish dignity, were famous throughout Europe; so Othello is calm and intensely dignified in any dangerous crisis; he says to the men who threaten him:

> Keep up your bright swords, for the dew will rust them.

And again, as I have pointed out, and as hardly any modern commentator has seemed to realize, Othello is as much sailor as soldier. His most magnificent metaphors are drawn from the sea; his very veins pulse with the pulse of its tides (III. iii.):

> Like to the Pontic sea,
> Whose icy current and compulsive course
> Ne'er feels retiring ebb, but keeps due on
> To the Propontic and the Hellespont;
> Even so my bloody thoughts, with violent pace,
> Shall ne'er look back.

And, when he has reached the last of life, he cries (V. ii.):

> Here is my butt
> And very sea-mark of my utmost sail.

In the magnificent passage I have quoted before, the one in which he recounts his wooing of Desdemona and the history of his own life (I. iii.), he represents himself as one of the

greatest adventurers of the world; he has suffered 'disastrous chances,' 'moving accidents by flood and field'; he has been in the 'imminent deadly breach'; he has undergone great travels; like Tassoni's Moor, he has wandered through 'deserts idle'; like Tassoni's Moor, he has been among the 'anthropophagi'; he has been one of the earth's greatest and most fearless adventurers, exactly like Spain.

He repeats, as I have said, the most remarkable incidents in the history of Spain. He has himself been in captivity to the 'insolent foe,' and escaped from it, and the deed of which, when he is dying, he is most proud is that 'he smote the Turk.'

Why should he, like Spain, have been in a barbaric captivity; why should he, like Spain, have 'smitten the Turk,' if he is not Spain? He had smitten the Turk, as Spain had, in a quarrel on behalf of Venice.

We also observe that Othello speaks as if he were definitely a Christian as opposed to the Turks (II. iii):

> Are we turn'd Turks, and to ourselves do that
> Which heaven hath forbid the Ottamites?
> For Christian shame, put by this barbarous brawl.

And just as the grander elements of the character coincide with the grander elements of Spain, so do the baser and more terrible elements coincide with those of Spain. The

Spaniards were always accused of keeping their women in an almost Oriental seclusion which they had learnt from the Moors, and guarding them with an Oriental suspicion; they were accused of lascivious love and easily aroused jealousy.*

Iago throughout lays stress upon Othello's lasciviousness, and, though there is a most noble and lofty element in his love, yet there is a savage lust as well.

The Spaniards were incessantly accused of this jealousy and suspicion in relation to other countries no less than in relation to their own personal life.

Again, the Spaniards, when angry, were capable of the most frightful frenzy of blood-lust; the 'Spanish fury' at Antwerp had appalled all Europe, and it was only the worst of many similar frenzies; I need hardly remark that the Spaniards were notorious for the terrible tortures they inflicted on the unhappy victims of their Inquisition.

Now, this again is exactly the case with Othello; when he is once angry he cannot control his blood-lust, he roars for blood like a wild beast, an 'arrabiato lupo,' as Tassoni puts it, and he incessantly longs to mutilate and torture his enemies; he only regrets that there are limits to the tortures which the human

* See H. Forneron, "Histoire de Philippe II."

frame can be brought to bear. He regrets that the human capacity for suffering is limited at all; he would have it eternal to gratify *his* wrath and *his* hate. He warns Iago (III. iii):

> Thou hadst better have been born a dog
> Than answer my naked wrath;

he moans for "blood, blood, blood"; he longs to cut off Cassio's nose and throw it to a dog (IV. i.), and his immediate question to Iago when he has seen the handkerchief in Bianca's possession is, "How shall I murder him, Iago?" and he wishes him nine years of solid torture, "I would have him nine years a-killing"; he moans one moment over Desdemona, "the pity of it, Iago," and the next declares that he will "chop her into messes"; and in the last awful scene he says (V. i.):

> Had all his hairs been lives, my great revenge
> Had stomach for them all.

Let us also observe one highly significant fact: that all the most crucial events in the relationship of Desdemona and Othello *take place in the presence of the official representatives of Venice.* I have already pointed out that Othello's right to marriage with Desdemona has to be ratified in the full presence of the Venetian Senate (I. iii.); the marriage is not valid until *they* ratify it, exactly as if it were

a treaty of alliance. Then, again, it is *in the presence of the Venetian ambassador*, Lodovico, that Othello makes his first overt breach with Desdemona, when he strikes her in public and calls her a devil (IV. i.). The ambassador promptly takes her part, rebukes Othello, chides him for his insult, and it is precisely *in that scene* that he is told he is to be recalled and that Cassio is to take his place, and Lodovico's comments show us that it is this scene which makes him believe Othello unworthy of his relation to Venice. The personal alienation and the official alienation proceed side by side, just as the marriage—the personal union—coincides with the opening of the official employment.

Finally, in the last scene of all (V. ii.), the Venetian ambassador appears immediately after Desdemona's death, and it is he who pronounces judgment on Othello and then expressly says that he must narrate these matters to the State. Could Shakespeare have shown us more plainly that his Venetian lady has the same meaning as Tassoni's Venetian lady? Not one of these episodes is present in Cinthio's novel; Shakespeare has added them all himself, and they prove beyond the possibility of doubt, I think, that his meaning is the same as Tassoni's.

Desdemona's State is *officially* present at her

marriage, *officially* protests against the insults offered to her, *officially* is present at her death. We are never allowed to forget that the State of Venice accompanies Desdemona.

We note also that the Turkish fleet is destroyed immediately after the arrival of Desdemona, Othello, and Cassio in Cyprus; it was, of course, destroyed in the Battle of Lepanto (1571), immediately after Don John had brought the united fleets of Venice and Spain to the deliverance of Cyprus; and this very event is said by Shakespeare to coincide with the celebration of Othello's nuptial. The very same bonfires are lit to celebrate both.

The Herald proclaims:

> It is Othello's pleasure, our noble and valiant general, that, upon certain tidings now arrived, importing the mere perdition of the Turkish fleet, every man put himself into triumph: some to dance, some to make bonfires, each man to what sport and revels his addiction leads him; for, besides these beneficial news, it is the celebration of his nuptial (II. ii.).

I really do not know how Shakespearian scholars can have overlooked scenes so intensely significant and so very plain.

It is immediately after this that Cassio's disgrace follows, and the disgrace of Don John of Austria did follow hard upon the Battle of Lepanto (II. iii.).

It is in the same scene that Iago tells us he had

learnt to drink in England, which implies that, like Antonio Perez, he had been in England.

Let me summarize the material so far:

1. There exists a whole European mythology symbolizing Spain as a Moor and Venice as a woman, and dealing with the wooing of Venice by Spain. It is found in Holland, France, and Italy alike.

2. Cinthio's novel closely resembles this mythology; it may be a part of it, though this is not certain, but it does resemble it.

3. Shakespeare has altered Cinthio's novel in many respects, and every one of his alterations tends in the direction of making the story more closely resemble Spanish history.

4. Tassoni, in his "Philippics," tells the story of the wooing of a Venetian lady by a Moorish soldier of adventure, which marriage he declares will result in the murder of the lady and the death of the Moor. His analysis of their characters and the psychology of their union corresponds in the closest possible way to Shakespeare's story of Desdemona and Othello, and Tassoni explains clearly that the Moor is Spain and the lady Venice.

5. Shakespeare has added to Cinthio's novel Desdemona's repudiation by her father, which corresponds to the Papal interdict upon Venice (1606).

6. Shakespeare has added to Cinthio's novel the fact that Desdemona's marriage has to be ratified by the Venetian Senate, the scene in which she is insulted in the presence of the Venetian ambassador, and the fact that the Venetian ambassador is present at her death—all of which seem to identify Othello with Tassoni's view.

7. Shakespeare has added the story of Roderigo's murder, which closely resembles the murder of Escovedo.

8. Shakespeare has added the story of Emilia and her death, which closely resembles the story of the Princess of Eboli and her relation to the supposed murder of Elizabeth of Valois.

9. The episode of the dropped handkerchief plays the central part in the murder (through jealousy) of Philip II.'s Queen—Elizabeth of Valois. Shakespeare has considerably altered this episode also and made it more closely resemble the historical tragedy.

10. Shakespeare has practically created the terrific character of Iago, who corresponds in his psychology closely to Antonio Perez, and whose relations to Othello are exactly the relations of Antonio Perez to Philip II.

11. Shakespeare has added the significant name of Iago (unnamed in Cinthio) and of Bianca (also unnamed in Cinthio).

12. Shakespeare has caused the ratification of

Othello's marriage to Desdemona before the Venetian Senate to take place at the same time as the sending of the Venetian fleet to deliver Cyprus from the Turks, and has caused Othello's nuptial to be celebrated on *the same day* as the Battle of Lepanto.

It is absolutely certain that Shakespeare's "Othello" deals with the same *subject* as Tassoni's "Philippics," and I think the above demonstration makes it practically certain that the subject has the same *meaning* in Shakespeare as in Tassoni.

It is difficult to say whether there is or is not a *direct* relation between Shakespeare's "Othello" and Tassoni and Boccalini; but the resemblances, to Tassoni especially, are so close that I believe there is. Let me remind the reader that "Othello" is generally ascribed to the year 1604. It cannot be later, as it was produced on November 1, 1604, in the old Banqueting House at Whitehall. So far as we know, it was not published till the quarto of 1622.

Boccalini's "Touchstone of Politics" was published in 1612, and his "New-Found Politik" possibly in 1613; at any rate, it cannot be later, as his death occurred in that year. Tassoni's "Philippics" in the collected form date *circa* 1615.

Both Boccalini and Tassoni were impassioned pro-Venetian patriots, and it is exceedingly probable that their English friends would perform before them or show them in MS. any strongly pro-Venetian English play, especially if importance had been given to such a play by its performance before the King.

I think there can be no reasonable doubt that "Othello" is both a personal tragedy and an epic tragedy; the personal tragedy is based on a terrible, sombre, and gloomy episode of Spanish history which all Protestant Europe, at any rate, knew of and believed to be a fact. The epic tragedy is the tragedy of Italy and Spain; Shakespeare, like most of his countrymen, probably felt the intensest possible sympathy for Italy, and he had, in addition, the strong personal motive of a desire to protect England; he did not wish England to be the 'tragic loading' of Othello's marriage bed.

If "Othello" really is his portrait of his great enemy, we can only say that in its terror, its magnificence, and its romance it is worthy alike of his genius and his generosity.

NOTE

A very curious version of Philip II.'s relations to his Queen will be found in Thomas Dekker's play, "Match-Mee in London" (1631), which he calls a "tragic-comedy of Spain."

The play has a double plot: one part consists of Philip II.'s jealousy of Don John of Austria; he employs a certain 'Iago' to ruin him, who professes friendship to Don John even while betraying him, and who is also Philip's confidant in his jealousy of his wife.

The main plot, however, consists of Philip's relations to his Queen and Tormiella. The King is intensely and unjustly jealous of his wife; at the same time he is in love with Tormiella, whom he places in attendance upon his wife and wishes to employ as a spy. The Queen is greatly enraged, partly by her husband's unjust suspicion, partly by his infidelity, and she even threatens Tormiella with death; the latter, however, convinces the Queen of her innocence, and the two women form a sort of league, which still more greatly enrages the King, who gives the order for the murder of the Queen.

He is made to believe that the murder has been carried out, and is filled with remorse and despair; but he is told that, after all, he has not been obeyed. He is reconciled to the Queen and all ends happily.

The reminiscences of " Othello " in this play are numerous and important. The most significant is the name of 'Iago' for the villain who betrays Don John and to whom the King confides his jealousy.

King. Iago see.
Looke all, bind fast this Divell, is there no Circle
To be damn'd in but mine?
Queen. Slave! let me go.
King. Oh thou lustful harlot.
Queen. Guard me heaven.

* * * * *

Let me have justice, as thou art a King.
King. To prison with them both.
Queen. As I am thy wife
Make not thyself a strumpet of me.
King. Hence, guard her.
Queen. I come Heaven, guarded with innocence.
King. Follow your Mistress, you!
Tormiella. Yes, to her grave!
Oh that I now were swallowed in some wave.
(*Exit both*).
King. O that I
Should in a woman's lap my kingdom lay,
Honour and life, and she should all betray
To a Groome, a slave.
Iago. Let not her poison run
Too neare your heart.
King. Iago, I have done.

Equally significant is the scene where the King is told of the Queen's death and that she died asserting her innocence to the end; the King cries—

My deere, dearest Queene is dead,

and asks:

What said she last?

His servant answers:

Commend me to the king.
And tell him thus, mine honour is not wreck'd
Though his love bee.

The King laments that his name will henceforth be a wounded name, and the fact that she lives is then revealed to him.

There are other reminiscences, but these will serve as examples.

I cannot offer any explanation of why Dekker's plot should differ so markedly in its conclusion from the ordinary versions of the tale; Shakespeare's "Othello" is far closer, alike to the versions current and to the facts of Spanish history. A possible suggestion is that Dekker could not endure its tragedy and found a happy ending, much as the eighteenth-century altered "King Lear."

APPENDIX

SINCE writing the preceding book I have come across a pamphlet which gives an important confirmation of the views expressed. This is Edward Daunce's "A Brief Discourse of the Spanish State," written by a Dutchman, but published in English in 1590.

This contains a psychological analysis of the Spanish character, and is particularly interesting as showing in what way the name "Othello" may have been suggested to Shakespeare.

Like everybody else, the writer describes the Spaniards as being of Moorish descent, and therefore cruel, suspicious, and treacherous. Their fame and power in the world are quite newly acquired and by the power of the sword. They inhabit a country which is largely desert and burnt by the heat of the sun, and one of their main characteristics is the extreme intemperance and violence of their passions.

All other creatures and even beasts spare those of their own family; but *the family of the Othmani and the Spaniards alone* are distinguished by this: that they will kill even their own children *and their chaste wives.* Such a

fact — the killing of chaste wives through jealousy — is known to no other nation, but is characteristic of Spain.

The writer instances especially the case of Philip II., who murdered his chaste wife largely because he was so exasperated by her continual pleas for mercy to his victims, the particular victims the writer quotes being Don Carlos and the unhappy Belgians. He was enraged because her compassion formed a check on his own unrestrained anger.

Here, it will be seen, we have asserted a definite comparison of Spain *with the Othmani alone upon earth;* we have it asserted that it is a *characteristic of theirs to murder, unjustly, chaste wives, excited to anger by the wife's compassion.* These are, surely, the definite traits Shakespeare has embodied in "Othello."

Daunce goes on to state that their passions lead them to be just as violent, cruel, and destructive to the countries under their rule as they are to individuals. The same passion leads them to destroy the one and the other.

Envy is another leading vice of the Spaniards, and is especially characteristic of this nation, who hate all that is above them. Here, again, Shakespeare would seem to have embodied a leading Spanish vice in Iago.

Edward Daunce's pamphlet is not yet mythology, but it contains the leading elements

which we find in both Shakespeare and Tassoni.

I would also refer the reader again to Adolphus van Dans's poem, "De Laudibus Elisabethæ," which, though in Latin, is most important for the study of the age. The writer persistently calls the Spaniards "Moors." Philip II. of Spain is "the rejoicing Moor," sending his fleet to violate the maiden Elisabeth and her virgin land; it is always the "Moorish" fleet, and the army it carries is always the "Moorish" army. It is carried away by "barbarian" rage, and, if it had succeeded, it would have murdered alike queen and country.

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